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The May

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WHEN YOU TAKE

BEECHAM'S PILLS.

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ASTOR, LENOX AND TILDEN FOUNDATIONS
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Miss Stephanie Bell, who danced so charmingly in "Peter Pan," and who more recently played a leading part in "The Poor Little Rich Girl."

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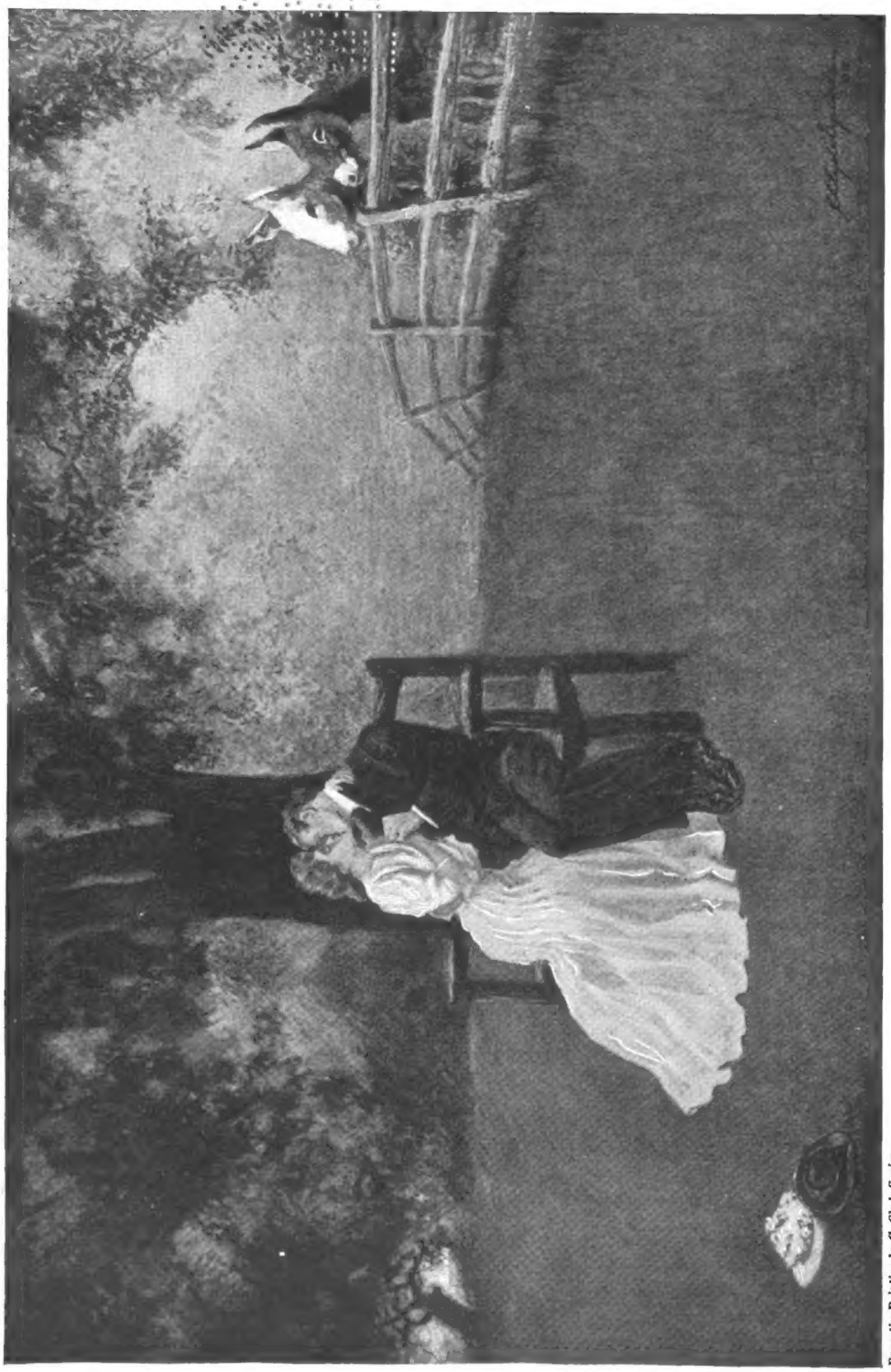

"ONE TOUCH OF NATURE."

From the Painting by C. Clyde Squires.

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Pity the Poor Birds

The Plumage Bill, proposing to give wild birds sorely needed protection from the milliners, has been introduced in Parliament. As things are now, women might have come to wearing entire birds on their heads, as we suggest in these pictures. Needless to say, none of the charming actresses would really adopt such headgear.

THE HOOPOE

Photo, Fenlsham & Banfield. *Setting by "The Royal Magazine."*

MISS ISOBEL ELSOM.

Miss Isobel Elsom, who sings and dances so charmingly in "After the Girl" at the Gaiety Theatre, stepped straight from the chorus into the part of leading lady.

Our artist has given Miss Elsom a headdress composed of a Hoopoe—not that this pretty young actress would really wear such a thing—it is simply a protest against those who might. Meanwhile Miss Elsom wears it in the illustration with the same dainty grace as she wears her new-found laurels.

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Photo, Claude Harris. *Setting by "The Royal Magazine."*

MISS CONNIE LUTTRELL.

In "Broadway Jones" Miss Connie Luttrell had a chance to distinguish herself, and, like the clever young actress she is, she made the most of it.

Of course Miss Luttrell is not in favour of wearing birds' plumage, and the Kagu with which she is crowned does not betoken her taste in millinery. Her hats are always delightful, and she wears them—well, as they should be worn!

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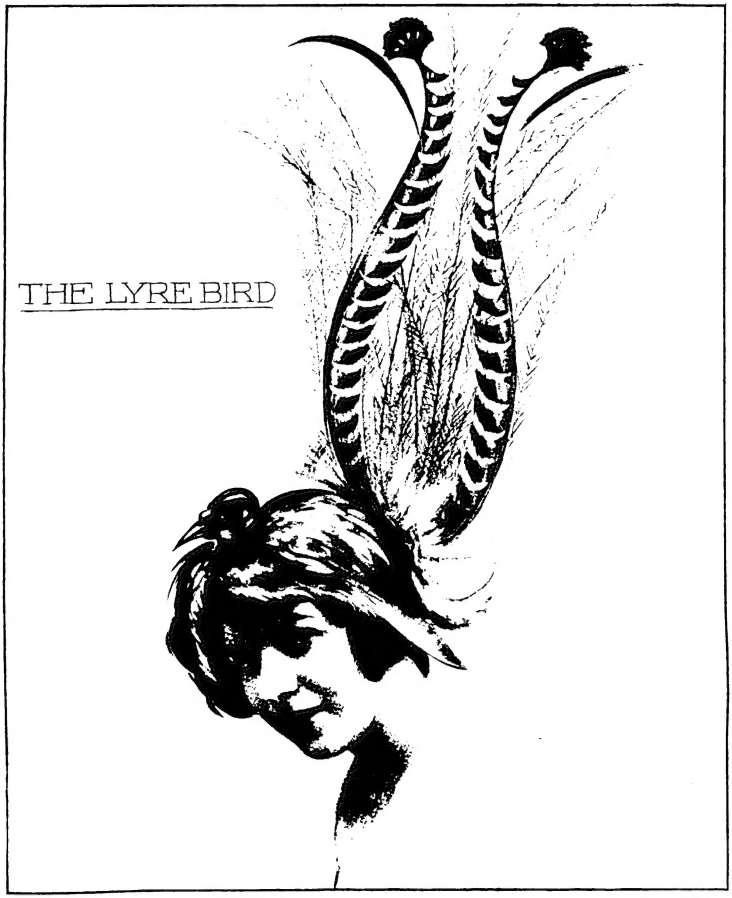

Photo, Dover Street Studios. *Setting by "The Royal Magazine."*

MISS INA CLAIRE.

Miss Ina Claire captured London by her performance in "The Girl from Utah," in which she shares the honours with Miss Phyllis Dare.

Needless to say, the Lyre Bird headdress is purely imaginary, for Miss Claire is wholly in sympathy with the Plumage Bill, and would never wear a hat of this description. Indeed, she makes a point of avoiding feathers, aigrettes, or ospreys when choosing trimmings for her hats.

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Photo, Fonlsham & Banfield. *Setting by "The Royal Magazine."*

MISS CYLLENE MOXON.

Miss Cyllene Moxon's beautiful face and figure have won her hosts of admirers among playgoers who favour musical comedy.

Miss Moxon has a tender heart and a beauty that needs no enhancing, and ospreys and aigrettes do not appeal to her; the Bird of Paradise she wears here is worn in a good cause—the cause of the many beautiful birds who are slaughtered for fashion.

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Photo, Elwin Neame. *Setting by "The Lugal Magazine."*

MISS PHYLLIS BEDELLS.

The first English *première danseuse* at the Empire, Miss Phyllis Bedells has already covered herself with glory, and her dancing is a delightful feature of the performance.

Birds have a firm friend in Miss Bedells, and Leadbetter's Cockatoo, perched jauntily on her head, is simply an appeal to those who let their love of fashion outrun their humanity.

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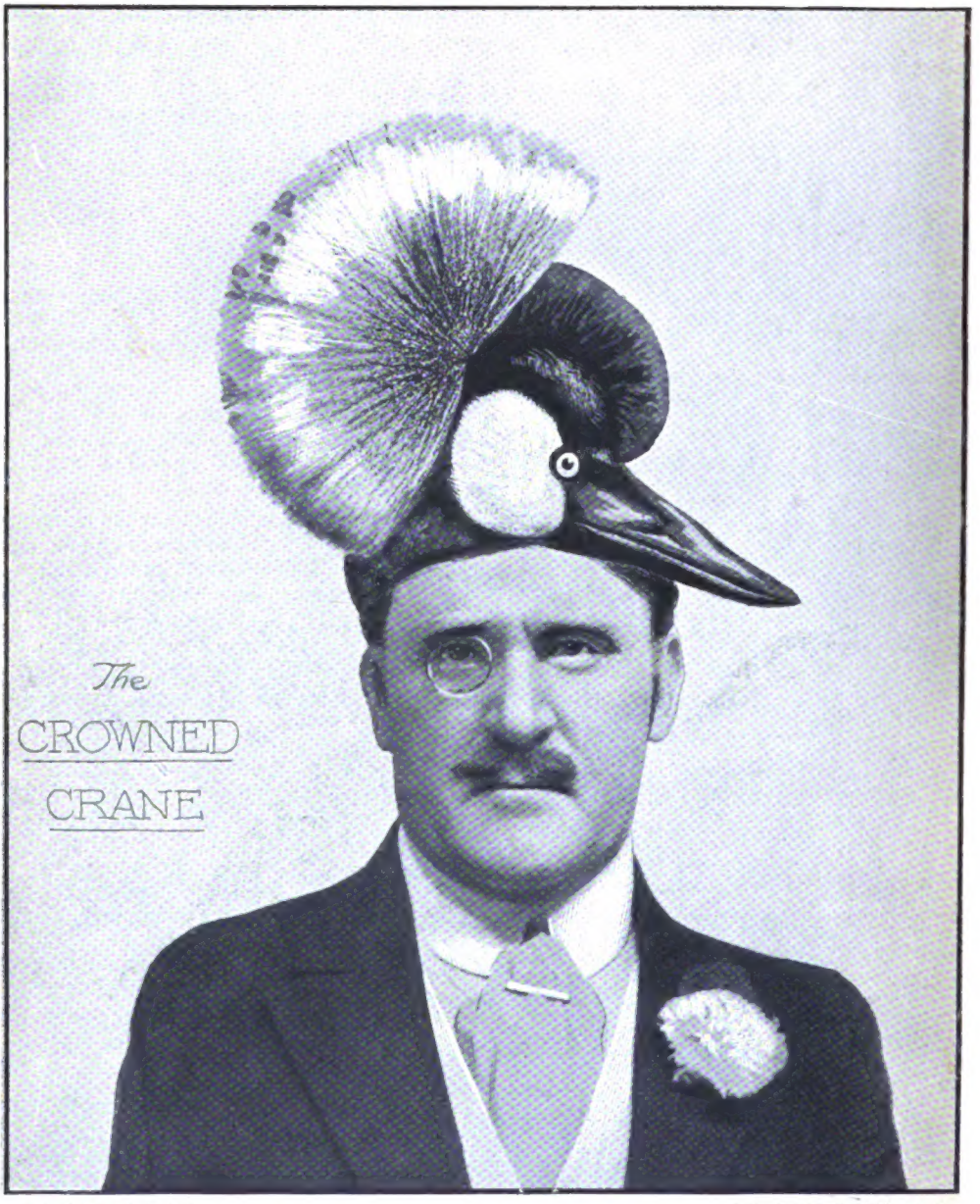

Photo, Foulsham & Banfield *Setting by "The Royal Magazine."*

MR. G. P. HUNTLEY.

In "The Marriage Market" Mr. G. P. Huntley has a part after his own heart, and is as inimitably amusing as ever.

The kindest-hearted of men, Mr. G. P. Huntley is all on the side of the birds, and the Crowned Crane headdress which our artist has inflicted upon him is a mute protest to the unthinking.

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A Story of Treason and Treachery.

By John le Breton.

Very many months ago there had been an order that the bridge at Amrakutch should be doubled in width. Nicholson, who had the job in hand, took a vow that it should be completed by the time that the Governor passed back along the line on the return from his tour. Now the thing was done, and the Governor was due at 2 o'clock on the next day. He had graciously consented to stop and inspect the work, and a little wooden station had been erected for his convenience, and made gaudy with fluttering flags.

Then, the monsoon broke—seven full days ahead of time. Still, it was only the forerunner of the real break, and the weather might clear up for a few hours. Then there would be fresh flags, and perhaps flowers.

The rainfall was lighter towards evening when Nicholson came out of his office, and walked over the bridge, a tall, lean man, his head bent to allow the water to run off his hat. His chief assistant, Mr. Chunder Sen, followed, a short and bulky figure in an ample mackintosh, sheltering under a good umbrella.

Except that it was bare of paint, the bridge was completed.

"Do you remember, Chunder Sen," Nicholson asked, "that you bet me three months' salary that we'd not be finished in time?"

Chunder Sen's glance came up with a jerk from his Wellington goloshes—the very newest thing from Bombay, and quite smart in appearance, besides being a perfect safeguard against wet feet.

"You are so clever, and excessively energetic, Mister Nicholson," he said conciliatingly. "At the diem when I spoke, it was beyond all contemplation. You, having attained the miraculous, it obliterates the commonplaces of a bet."

Nicholson walked on.

"A bet is a bet," he observed.

He had not the slightest intention of

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enforcing the payment of this particular one. He never noticed the long silence that elapsed before the other man spoke again.

"It was the not knowing that made me the inducement, Mister Nicholson. You have the advantage when you have performed what you say."

His persistence nettled Nicholson.

"Come now, if I had lost, you would have expected me to pay. I often expected to have to fork out. Perhaps you mean that you won't pay?"

Chunder Sen fairly writhed inside his mackintosh.

"Oh! Mister Nicholson," he cried; "it shall be the familee honour. I shall pay even if they are all upsold—for surely it will repay somehow!"

Nicholson's temper was at boiling point, instantly. He turned round and glared into his assistant's unhappy face.

"Look here, Mr. Chunder Sen," he said, with icy severity, "if you mean to pay—pay, and have done with it. But don't count upon it doing you any further service—here or hereafter!"

He marched off, and Chunder Sen stood in the rain, looking after him, silent and furious.

There was nothing wrong with Nicholson excepting that he happened to be British, heart, brain, code of honour, and all. And there was nothing wrong with Chunder Sen, who was as kindly, unselfish, and amiable a fellow as ever lived, excepting that he was a Bengali, and viewed the world, and life, as a Bengali must.

When Nicholson was quite out of sight, Chunder Sen began to walk on. He went down the line, past the railway huts, and on, into the dismal grey of the falling rain.

He was too miserable to go as usual to his quarters, and his frugal meal. Chunder Sen was a hero in his everyday life, only he did not know it. To him it appeared the most natural thing that out of his meagre salary he should maintain his father and mother, his mother's mother, his widowed sister and her three young children, besides sending five rupees every month to a female Eurasian relative who existed miraculously on the borderland of starvation somewhere near Calcutta.

When he had done cursing himself for his folly in having made the thrice accursed bet, there remained tragedy—no less. He was to pay away his salary for three months, and these helpless ones, to whom he was the giver of all, must starve. Never once did he think of mentioning them to Nicholson, and putting forward their plea for the right to live. He had experienced one taste of British scorn for the possible evader of a debt of honour. It was enough, and more than enough.

He had rounded the first curve, and he was a full mile away from the bridge, splashing along hopelessly, an odd, dumpling-like figure in his complete wet-weather gear. Suddenly he almost fell over two half-naked coolies who were unaccountably busy on the line itself. As they sprang up, he glimpsed a hole between the metals. It was treason—murder—the laying of a mine!

With a hoarse scream, he turned to run, but instantly they were upon him. The umbrella was flying down the line before a storm gust, his hat fell off, and as his agonised face was bared, he heard his name uttered, and felt himself seized by the throat.

Between them the men led him staggering to the side of the line, and seated him upon a pile of timber. He gasped and panted, coughed and spat, until, at last, he could breathe freely. The coolies stood by, the rain streaming off their glistening skins. Then one squatted down, and turned his face up to the victim. He demanded:

"Dost thou know me, Chunder Sen?"

Chunder Sen's aching eyeballs rolled in that direction.

"Ram Chundra?" he hesitated.

"Yea, Ram Chundra, and Lal Buksh also. We were as brothers once. Was it not so?"

Chunder Sen had been at college with them both. And here they were, half-naked and unkempt as illiterate coolies. Why? Even Chunder Sen's dazed mind supplied the answer readily. For the sake of that little hole upon the line—the line over which His Excellency the Governor would pass on the next day.

"We are nought beside thee, O well-placed one," cried Ram Chundra, making eyes of admiration; "the prize of competition was to thee. We failed, brother; we be two poor men seeking work."

Chunder Sen said effusively: "Good—very good." It was not a felicitous way of expressing his belief in the story, but he had not recovered his self-control. Also, he was acutely aware that he was quite alone with them, and that it was growing dark quickly. The men glanced at each other. In those three words he had told them that he had seen the excavation between the rails.

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Suddenly he almost fell over two half-naked coolies. . . . With a hoarse scream, he turned to run, but instantly they were upon him.

"We made this hole," said Ram Chundra, waving his hand towards it, "having this intention. Within the hour we should have gone to Nicholson Sahib, crying that we had found those at work upon it, who had fled at our approach. Wherefore, in the thankfulness of his heart, he should give us employment. There is yet work upon the bridge, and we be painters."

Lal Buksh took up the scheme smoothly.

"Yet, seeing that we have met with thee, and that Nicholson Sahib is thy friend, we will fill in the hole now. Thou wilt say to him: 'Friend, here be two who failed where I made success my own; give them work for thy friend's sake.' Surely he will hasten to give thee pleasure?"

Then Chunder Sen remembered everything. His anger and despair rode him with spurs on the way to madness. In the name of all his gods, he wished that he had never stumbled upon this conspiracy. His own little world, compact of the trust of the helpless, his own pity and generosity, and their mutual affection, was crumbling into ruin. What did he care if the Governor and every European in Amrakutch were blown sky-high, so long as only Nicholson went with them?

How much of all this he had said, or left unsaid, he did not know when he came to himself again. But he did know that he had voiced his suspicions of these two men overplainly, and that there could be no more feigning ignorance as to the meaning of their presence on the line. His rage burnt itself out suddenly, and in the cold ashes of it was a dreadful fear. He sprang up, but Ram Chundra's compelling touch was on his shoulder, and he sank under it abjectly.

"Now, the matter is easy," said Ram Chundra comfortably. "It is true that we came to do this thing, as thou sayest, but it shall be a greater thing than we had conceived. Let the mine, then, be laid, not here, but beneath the station, where all the Sahib-lôg shall be gathered together. We be thy coolies, O Chunder Sen. See that we have time, and that none overlook our labour."

Quite clearly there was no choice. There was a flood of horror, of bloodshed, to

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plunge into, but on the other side was life, free of Nicholson and the forever infamous bet.

The alternative he read in the eyes of the so-called coolies. These men had come with their lives in their hands.

He put his cold fingers to his bruised throat shudderingly. But for the merest chance, he would have been a swollen-faced corpse lying beside the line by now—or across it, so that the first train might account for his violent end.

Yes, the fierce question in these intent eyes had to be answered in the affirmative. His darkened, puffy lips formed his first words to them again.

No more was needed. Ram Chundra took command.

"Go, then, before us down the line, and we will follow under thy protection. We have dynamite in the bushes here, and we will bring it to a safe place near the station. Come, brother."

There were several stunted bushes within a few yards, and as they approached them, a man rose from the shelter and sped away, silently, and with such swiftness that the darkness swallowed him up almost at once, and made pursuit impossible.

They just saw that he was naked, save for a loin-cloth, and Lal Buksh thought he had seen a long, white beard, but he could not be quite sure.

At first Chunder Sen shook like a leaf, and his teeth chattered with insane fright, but the other men laughed at him until he braced himself up to a show of calmness.

It was but a coolie, they said—an old coolie who could not have understood the English they had been speaking, even had he been close enough to overhear. Also, if he were a spy, he would give notice that at this part of the line there might be danger, and the police would look and find a hole, and no more. Let them look.

Chunder Sen nodded, and hurried away back towards the station. His comfort was, that in the half light, the hidden man could not have recognised him or have seen his companions clearly. He found the night watchman at the station, and told him that the two new coolies waiting beyond had been taken on to work there. Then he left them, and walked leisurely in the direction of his own quarters. He had to pass the chief's rough bungalow. It was lighted up, and through the open doorway Nicholson could be seen at dinner, his servant standing behind his chair.

As Chunder Sen looked on them from the symbolic blackness without, a voice close beside him set every nerve in his overwrought body jarring tumultuously. Then the panic subsided into a deadly quiet as an old man came out into the light shed by Nicholson's lamps, and salaamed. He was a lean old man, garbed as a coolie, and having a long white beard. Without a doubt, it was the man who had been hidden in the bushes. But he did not seem to recognise Chunder Sen.

"I would speak with Nicholson Sahib," he said breathlessly. "They who serve him drive me away. If thou also art his servant——"

A sting of anger forced Chunder Sen into speech.

"I am the chief specification Sahib," he replied curtly.

The old man was speaking in English with a purer accent than that of Chunder Sen himself. He was no coolie.

"Then lead me unto him. He will give thanks to thee also when he hath heard that which I have come far to tell. Look thou—when the Sahib's father was Postmaster in Kanara I was clerk in the telegraphs—even I. I have borne Nicholson Baba in these arms—and now he is a great man Say unto him, I beseech thee, that Govind Vinayak waits, and would speak with him—for his life's sake!"

Chunder Sen could scarcely control the trembling that seized upon him now more strongly than ever. He was cold all over in spite of the steamy heat. The whisper came hissingly from between his unsteady lips.

"What it it—what is it? Tell *me*. I—I am the friend of Nicholson Sahib! Whence comest thou?"

The old man had not recognised Chunder Sen—that was only too true. He gave up his story simply as a child.

"From Amedhar, and to us there came one, many months ago, speaking of killing the Sahibs so that such as he should be Sahibs in their place. All this we passed with negligence until he left us, saying that Boynton Sahib should be killed—and he was killed. Also, that Grant Sahib should be killed—and he was killed. Then he returned to us, boasting greatly, and said that the Burra Sahib would come to this place upon a day that is to-morrow, and that he would be killed.

"Thereupon I made report to police-inspector, who returned reply that it was not his district—it being seven long days,

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marches from here. I laid information with the District-Judge Sahib—and he reproached me, saying that it was such as I who, talking of treason, made treason. Then I learnt that the one unto whom the Burra Sahib journeyed hither to do honour was my Nicholson Sahib—my little Sahib, that is a great man since. Therefore, have I come afoot as a poor man to warn him, lest his day of joy be turned into bitterness by these doers of evil."

There was no response at all. Chunder Sen stood and stared, his mind a sheer blank of terror. The old man stooped and whispered:

"Behold, I came by the new line of rail, and there I saw two men making a pit. I hid in the bushes, and thereunder were sticks of dynamite. And, again, came another to the two, and it was said between them that the mine should be laid not between the rails, but under the station. And one of the men was he who came to my village saying that the Burra Sahib should be killed here on the day that is to-morrow. *Now*, take me unto my Nicholson Sahib!"

Nicholson had just finished dinner when Chunder Sen came in, rolling his eyes, and working his hands nervously in the air. He jumped up and pushed back his chair, with a brusque demand for information.

"What's wrong? What the——"

"Oh, Mister Nicholson!" spluttered Chunder Sen, sawing at the air, "there is the very old Dickens wrong! You will be hardly creditable when you hear. No more less than design to wreck His Excellency's train to-morrow. Individually, I ascertained the culprit, an old man, but one of strength. A mile up line he was digging sleepers, and I, irrespective of personal welfare, maintained the capture."

"Where is he?" asked Nicholson sharply.

"Under certain pretences I decoyed him until several coolies were obtainable, and then, in spite of mighty strugglings, we incarcerated him in one of the huts—the key being herewith." Chunder Sen showed it lying in the palm of his hand. "And if I might venture advice, Mister Nicholson, I would say avoid unrestful rumourings by keeping him locked up until after advent of Governor to-morrow. Then if I am wrong, I accept all blameworthiness."

It was not the first time that Nicholson had taken the law into his own hands, and in an instant, he decided that Chunder Sen was right. The whole thing might turn out to be a foolish scare, but if he warned the authorities, it would certainly cause a worthy but highly nervous gentleman to deviate from plans which it was most important to all Amrakutch that he should carry out. And even if mischief had been intended, they had secured one man, and now had warning which would keep them on the alert. So he sat down again, and selected a cigar, for he had had a long day of it, and was dog-tired.

"Very well," he said. "I'll see into it later. Tell the police to be on the look-out, and have the line patrolled all night. Examine all the approaches, yourself, at daybreak. We'll leave nothing to chance, though personally, I should say it is some old fool playing at plots in order to bring his private grievances to light. Time enough to send him to be examined by the magistrate after the Governor has gone."

Knowing the thoroughness with which Chunder Sen invariably carried out all work intrusted to him, Nicholson made no personal survey of the line next morning—nor of the station. It was enough that he found the line being patrolled, according to orders, when he came upon the scene, and that Chunder Sen was superintending everything even more busily and fussily than usual. So, Nicholson, who was going to entertain His Excellency and sundry guests to tiffin in the big marquee attached to the temporary station, devoted himself to preparations for a quite exceptionally gorgeous hospitality.

Ram Chundra and his comrades sat peacefully in a disused tool-hut about a hundred yards up the line, guarding certain batteries. They had laid wires underground very skilfully and expeditiously during the night, and were in a position to explode with a touch, the mine they had placed under the platform. When they had quite finished, Chunder Sen had given the delayed orders for the patrolling of the line.

In the next tool-shed was Govind Vinayak, peering through a crack in the boards of the door, seeing Nicholson himself now and again, yet unable to communicate with anybody. There was practically no ventilation in his prison, and Chunder Sen had thoughtfully omitted to provide him with water or food.

It wanted but half-an-hour to the time when His Excellency's train was due. The labourers were lined up along the approaches, their foremen in front. The sun was shining, and the little station, with its streaming flags, and gay, red cloth, was gradually filling with guests, a score of them, more or less. Nicholson was talking to the doctor's wife at the end

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of the platform nearest the signal-box when he first became aware of a continuous and irritating sound of heavy blows striking upon metal.

A moment later, he guessed that the prisoner in the hut had found some tool in there, and was determined not to let his presence pass unnoticed. Chunder Sen was on guard at the door, but in vain did he command, threaten, or persuade—the blows never ceased. Nicholson shrugged his shoulders and supposed that human endurance had its limits, and that the old man could scarcely maintain such violent effort for another thirty minutes. It was to be hoped that he would exhaust himself, since otherwise, explanations might have to be offered.

It was seventeen minutes to the hour, and now the Padre was telling Nicholson that it was an auspicious occasion. Through the even flow of small-talk, words and half-formed words, for which he could not account, began to drift into Nicholson's brain—rythmically, continuously, repeated over and over again.

"*Atform . . . platform . . . under the platform . . . platform — platform. . . .*"

Just for one ghastly instant he thought that his brain was going wrong. Then, abruptly leaving the puzzled Padre, he walked away. And all the while the prisoner in the tool-hut was swinging a bar against its iron walls with all the force he could bring to bear upon the task. Crash—a pause—two rapid knocks—then *crash* again.

Nicholson walked down the line at his usual pace, though his heart was beating like a drum, and there were beads of cold sweat breaking out on his temples. For he read the message that was being hammered out upon the walls of the hut, only too well, now—and somehow, he *knew*, without reasoning or deduction, that Govind Vinayak, who had taught him the Morse Code, a lifetime away in North Kanara, was in there, tirelessly, desperately, sending out his thunderous warnings to save the man who long ago had been the child that he loved.

"*Mine under platform — mine under platform. . . .*"

The train had passed the Ullundur station. In eleven minutes it was due at Amrakutch. Nicholson stopped at the signal-box and gave an order. The distance signal dropped to Danger, and the line was blocked.

Before he had traversed the few intervening yards to the hut, he knew all, or nearly all. Chunder Sen saw the signal fall, and simultaneously, the approach of his Chief. His face drew into a distorted grin, but his eyes were windows to the naked terror of his soul. He wavered, tried to keep his stand, wavered again—and fled.

Not in haste, not as one in fear of pursuit. His chance lay in the urgency of the hour, and of the situation. He knew what Nicholson had to do, and how quietly he would do it. So he walked away up the line, looking neither to the left nor to the right where his confederates waited in ignorance of the coming of their fate. No one noticed him as he walked out of sight. No one knew that he left the line and made across country to strike the jungle. He was dropping into the native under-world of beggary, squalor, and nothingness. And Nicholson let him go.

"*Mine under the platform—wires underground.*"

Nicholson tapped on the corrugated iron.

"*Repeat.*"

Instantly the outrageous clanging ceased, the heavy tool fell to the ground. The message was reeled off in distinct rappings, and the whereabouts of the two conspirators revealed. There was an addition—"I am thy servant, and thy father's servant, Govind Vinayak."

Nicholson tapped "Accepted," and turned sharply to go. Then with a heaven-sent impulse he stopped at the door, and put his lips to a crevice in the boards of it.

"Rest now, till I come again, friend," he said.

Now that the direct clue had been given it was easy to trace the line of the wires, all the way to the platform, by the lighter-coloured fragments of subsoil which had mingled with the darker earth when it had been replaced and stamped down. There was no loose earth left about to attract attention. Most of the smoothing over had been done by naked feet, but here and there were the criss-cross markings of goloshes—Wellington goloshes, perhaps.

There was a cart standing near the marquee. Sudden sharp orders were issued to move it out of sight, and a dozen men rushed to obey. Nicholson helped, and somehow the cart was upset on the track of the wires. The crowd of pushing, shouting coolies grew denser and more excited. Nicholson, in the rear, hidden alike from the watchers in the hut, and the guests on the platform, probed the rain-soft earth with long scissors, snatched from the office in passing, found the wires, and cut them.

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Govind was not there. Face downward upon the earthern floor, with torn hands and bruised limbs, was the frail husk of him, cast off by much suffering. (*Page* 16, *col.* 1.)

The cart was righted and run behind some sheds. Nicholson returned to the platform. He took Mackarness of the police aside, and whispered a word or two in his ear that made him whistle under his breath, and retire precipitately to seek out his inspector. The signal fell just as the on-coming train slackened speed. At the appointed hour, the Governor and his staff were on the platform, His Excellency murmuring his first expressions of congratulation and admiration.

Simultaneously, the police-inspector was introducing himself to the conspirators, having taken the precaution to put a couple of his men outside the hut. Ram Chundra instantly pressed the key which was to have worked havoc over at the station. In the pleasant calm that succeeded, he and his fellow-conspirator submitted sullenly to be handcuffed.

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They said a great many picturesque and unjust things about Chunder Sen, but at the time they did not know exactly what had happened.

Nicholson entertained the Governor as a great man should be entertained, and when, after the usual honours, they drank his health, he made an excellently brief speech. When the train, with its distinguished freight, had resumed its journey, and the unsuspecting guests had dispersed, he hurried off to seek Govind Vinayak, who had cleared the greatest day of his life from the hideous tragedy which had been overhanging it.

As he passed the iron hut, he saw that the police must have gone to the rescue as he had directed, for the door had been broken open, and was now slightly ajar. He also noticed that there was a constable on guard. Something in the man's expression arrested him. He went back to the hut, and flung open the door.

Govind was not there.

Face downward upon the earthen floor, with torn hands and bruised limbs, was the frail husk of him, cast off by much suffering. Nicholson looked, and he saw all that there was to see. His face was white and fierce, and his hands gripped upon themselves until the straining muscles showed through the skin. Swiftly his mind visioned the old man's long journey, his agony of despair when he found himself imprisoned and betrayed, the long night in the stifling atmosphere of the hut, without water, food, or rest. Then, the last tremendous, almost incredible effort, and—the end.

Nicholson knew in his heart that that end was peace, but in that moment he would have had no mercy at all for Chunder Sen, who had brought this thing about.

The station dined without its guest of honour that night, for Nicholson sat alone in his dark and silent bungalow. To a messenger, breathless with haste, his servant made oath that he dared not approach his master.

"Behold! The Sahib sorrows as one who hath lost a man of his own blood."

Half a century ago,
On the dresser in a row,
There were twelve (for use, not show)
Willow-pattern plates,

All quite new and flawless when
First the dresser held them, then
Two were broken, leaving ten,
Which, the legend states,

Were, by that especial fate
China suffers soon or late,
Afterwards reduced to eight
Willow-pattern plates.

Then, the blame is hard to fix
(Possibly some conscience pricks),
Shortly there were only six
(Never mind the dates),
Half-a-dozen, and no more.
Till one day, upon the floor,
Smash! And two from six leaves four
Willow-pattern plates;

More or less repaired, 'tis true,
One with rivets, one with glue;
So that soon there were but two
White and dark blue mates—

Only (in the past to delve
No more, but the subject shelve),
Only two instead of twelve
Willow-pattern plates.

Ada Leonora Harris.

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ARE YOU A MR MOULDY?

BY FRANK ST. AUSTELL.

Quite half the men and women one meets in towns are bored, lifeless, listless, dissatisfied people. They are like a motor-engine running at half power because carbon has been deposited on the cylinders and not removed. Unless human beings keep themselves "in tune," they are neither healthy nor happy. The process of keeping in perfect condition is so simple that no one bothers to do it. This article tells, simply and sanely, how to go about it.

ONLY fifty per cent. of the inhabitants of modern towns are alive. The rest are half alive. Watch them in the streets—men and women. They walk along listless and preoccupied; one must travel far before encountering a smiling face. The young men are round-shouldered, pale faced, and lethargic; the old ones are corpulent, short of breath, and congested-looking.

As for the women, the young ones compare favourably with the young men as regards a healthy appearance, but there is no spring in their walk, and there are tired lines under their eyes and running from the nose to the mouth. Elderly women, as a rule, have, frankly, the appearance of walking bundles of misery.

The one unmistakable symptom of health is joy. As long as a perfectly healthy individual is not hungry, or in pain, he is happy, without any other definite cause. Unless he is in perfect health he is never completely happy.

The man who is really alive longs to hit someone in the eye for sheer joy, and the woman who is really alive would chuckle to see him do it.

The chief reason for the prevailing twilight state of things is that nowadays we live chiefly with our minds at the expense of our bodies. All our emotion is mental, and we are strangers to physical emotion. By physical emotion I mean that bodily sensation of ecstasy which comes to the footballer when he kicks a goal, the batsman when he hits a boundary, or, in a lesser degree, to the ordinary citizen who, say, draws a cork which three other men have been unable to move. Excepting the last sensation, all these are foreign to the great majority of townsmen; they get them vicariously by watching someone else do the kicking or hitting, which is not the same thing.

Once upon a time men had to be physically excellent or perish, but modern life makes, for the most part, no direct physical demand on men and women. They are more passive resisters of a number of extraneous shocks and stresses than anything else. It was different in the old days, when someone lay in wait with a club, or bears ate people, or even before the tube and motor-'bus came, and we were compelled to walk.

Occasionally a vague instinct for reform troubles one person here or there. The young man gives up eating meat for a period, or eats twice as much as usual, according to his particular theory. The elderly one takes to running up the tube stairs instead of using the lift. The result, of course, is simply indigestion in the first case, heart failure in the second; the young man returns to his old

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courses, the old one is decently buried, and the world rolls on as before.

The majority of people nowadays eat too much, or eat injudiciously, and take too little exercise. They live for the most part sedentary lives in a confined atmosphere, and breathe so shallowly that they never get enough oxygen. Consequently their circulation is poor, and their blood impure; hence the sleepiness and apparent indolence all around us

As a matter of fact, it is wrong to blame the average person for being dull, slow, and generally deadly. He is being slightly poisoned all day long through lack of fresh air. At night he goes to a theatre, club, music-hall, or home; fresh air does not abound in any of these places, and so he wakes in the morning rather sleepier than when he went to bed. So does she, though the average woman has more spare time to be in the open air than the average man, if only she would avail herself of it.

How, someone asks, are the joyful consummation, the perpetual fitness and capacity for merry laughter, the sound digestion, the bright eye, the good sleep, the gamesomeness at breakfast to be achieved? Well, as this is an impatient age, hating the didactic manner, and requiring its pills triple gilt, I will adopt the ancient expedient of the parable, and tell the story of Mr. Mouldy.

In the beginning Mr. Mouldy was an averagely bright boy; then, in due course, he left school, and was placed in an office. For a little the novelty upheld him, and then gradually he began to wither. There seemed, after six months or so had tramped by on leaden feet, so singularly little left in life.

For example, poor Mr. Mouldy was actually expected to work. At school he had never done much, and his father seemed content to go on paying money for nothing, but his employers frankly declined to do so. Consequently he thought he would take to work and die, but it failed to kill him, and worse still, the authorities expected him to keep it up. Mr. Mouldy had never shone as an athlete, but he used to play an average game, and enjoyed a good deal of exercise at school. Now he found it difficult to get away for games, and gradually gave them up with the exception of a little mild and occasional tennis.

Gently, but surely, Mr. Mouldy's life came to be something like this: At 7.45—8.0 a.m.

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A day in the life of Mr. Mouldy, and of many other young men who live out their little days in office and counting-house.

This was his programme week in, week out. During the week-end he got a little more fresh air, but the sleepy feeling that obsessed him all the week never really blew away. He was always civil except at breakfast, but never really sunny. Frequently he caught colds. Often he was livery. He did not enjoy life particularly, but he supposed everyone else was much the same.

Perhaps this state of things would have continued till this day had not Mr. Mouldy fallen in love. She was a nice girl, and told him to ask her again in another month. He did, and she shook her head.

"No, Charles," she declared sorrowfully, yet firmly, "I couldn't bear it. I don't say you aren't delightful on your day, but that day comes too seldom. Generally you depress me so — it isn't so much what you say, as your face and general atmosphere—that if we were married I should scream first and then hit you on the head with a shovel."

This was a sore blow to Mr. Mouldy, because he liked the girl. Accordingly, he hied him to an expert, and asked

he tumbled out of bed, bathed, dressed, breakfasted, and caught an 8.45 train to town. He smoked all the way up, and, it being an office where you smoked, during most of the morning. At 1 p.m. he went out to lunch, and after lunch he lit a cigarette and strolled back to the office. At 5.30 he left it, and took a train home. After dinner he smoked a pipe and read, or sometimes worked a little.

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if anything could be done to brighten him up.

The expert ran a thoughtful eye and inquiring hand over Mr. Mouldy's physique. He was a big expert, and Mr. Mouldy had never felt so microscopic in his life.

"My dear sir," exclaimed the expert, "you are so undeveloped—no wonder you feel depressed. Feel these, and these. No muscle at all! What is your weight? Ah! I thought so. We'll soon alter all that. Take a deep breath. Dear me—rather poor chest expansion. Never mind! Now just tell me what sort of life you lead."

The expert ran a thoughtful eye and inquiring hand over Mr. Mouldy's physique.

Mr. Mouldy poured out the tale of his little days. The expert shook his head.

"You must get up at 7.15," he commanded. "The exercises I shall give you (I am going to describe some of these later) will take a quarter of an hour or twenty minutes. I suppose it takes you half an hour to bathe and dress. That allows you to have breakfast at eight, and have it in comfort. You must give up swallowing it in five minutes, and rushing for a train.

"You may eat what you like, but avoid anything you know disagrees with you. Don't smoke too much, and only after a meal. Get as much fresh air as you can, and go to bed early. But, above all, map out your day and fit in your fresh air and exercise, and stick to your plan. If you go to bed at ten, make a habit of it—that is, don't go to bed at ten one night and eleven the next. Please yourself about alcohol, but I should drink water for lunch if I were you—for a bit, anyhow. I don't think a young man needs spirits, and beer is livery stuff.

"You are to do the exercises every morning, with your mind concentrated on them. That is the great point—keep your mind on your work. An exercise done five times well is better than if it were done ten times inattentively. Deep breathing will make you giddy at first, but that is only temporary."

"Yes," murmured Mr. Mouldy.

"You are not to develop terrific muscles," continued the expert, "but you haven't any at all worth speaking of. The thing to do is to keep a reasonable amount of muscle healthy—particularly the abdominal muscles. Don't exercise on an empty stomach; eat a biscuit first. Wear just your pyjamas. Don't overdo it. The idea is to make your heart beat just a little faster than usual, to buck up the circulation, but not to put a strain on it. Of course, you will exercise first, directly on rising, and then take a cold bath if you can stand it, or a tepid one if you can't."

"I always have a cold one," put in Mr. Mouldy. He felt bound to do himself bare justice.

"It is the continuity of these exercises that counts," pursued the great man. "Make them as much a part of dressing as shaving. You'll find a difference in a month.

"Measure yourself periodically, and weigh yourself, and watch progress. You ought to put on another stone. You'd be much fitter if you did."

Mr. Mouldy was twenty-four years old, stood 5 ft. 10½ in. on his bare feet, and weighed 10 st. 7 lb.

"You breathe this way," demonstrated the expert. He contracted the abdominal muscles, and inhaled deeply through the nose, sinking his chin on his breast and gradually throwing back his head during inhalation. He did *not* raise his shoulders. His chest swelled visibly, and Mr. Mouldy stood in awe at the expansion. Then the expert exhaled through the mouth, relaxing the abdominal muscles.

"Now go away," he concluded, "stick to your instructions, and you'll be another man in a few months."

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And strangely enough his words came true.

Here are six exercises which Mr. Mouldy did faithfully day by day. He started by doing each ten times (except the preliminary deep breathing one, which he did six times), and increased slowly to thirty times. First he hated them, and they made him stiff. Then he tolerated them. At last he dared not miss them, because he felt so slack all day if he did.

First then, on rising, he flung his window wide open (of course, it had been open all night), and, standing before it, inhaled and exhaled six times, as the expert had shown him. Then followed these exercises.

2. Standing erect, with heels together, chest up, and arms extended in front of the body, he swung them out horizontally till they were in line with his shoulders, forcing his shoulders back, and inhaling. Then he returned to the first position, exhaling.

3. Next he advanced the right foot, and contracted the biceps of the right arm by bringing his closed right fist up to the top of the arm, and the triceps of the left by extending the left arm backwards, the fist also closed. Then he reversed the proceeding, and advanced the left foot, giving his left biceps and right triceps a turn. The biceps is the bulgy muscle in the front of the upper arm, and the triceps the one at the back.

4. Next he did an exercise for the abdominal muscles. He lay on his back on the ground, hands clasped behind his head, and brought first one leg and then the other up at right angles to his body alternately. His heels were not allowed to touch the ground when his legs were lowered. They only came to within about three inches of it. At first he could only do this about six times, and then it gave him a pain in his waist.

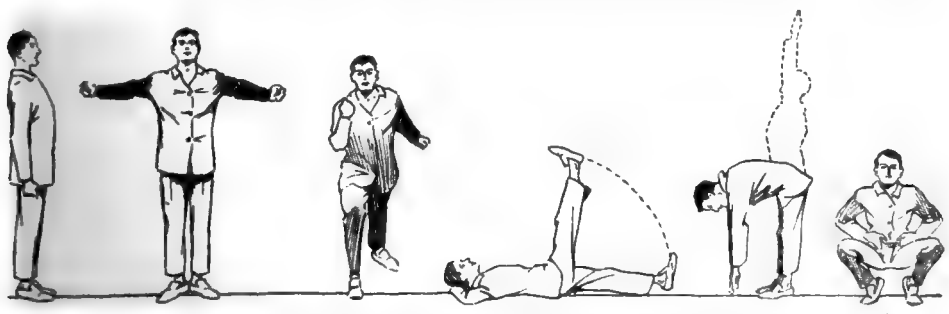
5. Next he stood erect, and inhaled, raising both arms above his head, and then swung them down till the finger-tips touched the floor, keeping his knees unbent, and exhaling. At first he couldn't touch the floor at all, but success came in time.

His chest swelled visibly, and Mr. Mouldy stood in awe at the expansion.

6. Last he stood erect, with hands on hips, and feet about eighteen inches apart, and sank down into a squatting position, without leaning forward. Then he rose, by the aid of the leg muscles, and repeated the movement.

In six months Mr. Mouldy was quite another person, and satisfactorily engaged.

These few exercises rouse up the whole body section by section. Performed conscientiously every morning from ten to thirty times each, they are quite sufficient to keep anyone fit. They may be done with dumb-bells, or running corks, or simply with the hands closed. There is no point in using heavy dumb-bells. They are equally suitable for men, women, or children.



1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6.

These diagrams show exactly how the exercises should be done. Study them in conjunction with the instructions, and you will find no difficulty in achieving success.

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Virtue Overdone

By Dorothy Rose.

There is perhaps no one more wearying to the flesh than the aggressively virtuous girl. Anyone who has suffered at her hands will appreciate the following article, which shows the calamities that sometimes attend an excess of virtue.

It is a saddening fact that virtue is not always so attractive as it might be. Black sheep have ever been more popular than saints, and haloes, like hobble skirts, are difficult to wear becomingly. Virtue overdone becomes a vice, and there is no one more irritating than a girl who works her pet virtue too hard.

The over-modest girl is rare nowadays; she went out with poke-bonnets and crinolines, but even now one occasionally meets her—a little, colourless creature, with a "hope-you-don't-mind-my-existing" manner, and a drooping aspect, heightened by the sack-like garments in which she is habitually clad. The responsibility of cooking the dinner brings her out in a cold perspiration, and she covers a pin-cushion with as much trepidation as if she were re-upholstering the seats of the Albert Hall.

Self-confidence is a valuable asset, but the over-confident girl is a most unpleasant person. She is not content to fill a little space, but frequents the foreground with the persistence of a music-hall star. She has unbounded faith in her own capabilities, and would take charge of a lunatic asylum or the Home Fleet with the utmost equanimity.

Celia was a girl of this type; she had her limitations, but she would have died rather than admit them. So it was that when a confiding friend besought her to get up a concert in aid of the Band of Hope she consented blithely, quite regardless of the fact that her knowledge of music was on a par with that of a Hottentot, whipped up her musical friends, and prevailed upon others to contribute a short dramatic sketch.

What was her horror upon the night in question when, instead of the entertaining fare expected by the rows of shining-faced children, a menu of Mozart, Wagner, and

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Beethoven was dished up for their benefit. They bore it in stony silence until one small boy created a diversion by standing on his chair and demanding "You Made Me Love You" in a piercing treble.

Celia clasped agonised hands and pinned her faith on the sketch. Alas! her hopes were speedily dashed, for *After Midnight* proved to be a piece of such lurid tendencies that the curate, in a flutter of horrified agitation, marshalled the entire juvenile audience out of the schoolroom, leaving Celia to receive anger and derision where she had fondly expected praise and adulation.

Tidiness is a virtue which may easily develop into a vice, and there are girls who will have convulsions if a book is an eighth-of-an-inch out of the perpendicular, or a cushion has shifted its moorings. Beth was one of these people; her room was a triumph of mathematical precision; her gloves, ties, and belts were arranged in their boxes with the praiseworthy exactitude of sardines.

It was when she and her sister Meg, a young person of consistent recklessness, were packing for a visit, that a dire calamity arose through Beth's passion for neatness. Seeing her sister's new evening dress adorning the bed-rail she deposited it in a cupboard, and it was not until they were dressing for a dance on the night of their arrival that Meg discovered she had forgotten her frock.

"I'm sure I laid it out on the bed ready to pack," she wailed, "and when the man came for the box it was gone, so I thought you'd put it in."

"I put it away in the cupboard," retorted Beth with an air of conscious virtue, whereat her sister fell upon her with heat and

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She fell an easy prey to the designs of the elegant damsel at the blouse counter, who . . . sold her an unserviceable white silk at 5s. 11d.

demanded the loan of her new frock as compensation. And to avert a family feud, Beth was forced to hand over her treasured *charmeuse* to her careless sister, and don the somewhat elderly blue silk she had meant to keep for lesser festivities.

Generosity is a delightful trait, but it can be, and often is, carried to excess. There are people who will give away everything they possess, and many things they do not. They will give with tears in their eyes to a clothing fund for Fiji Islanders, and cheerfully leave their tailor's bill indefinitely unpaid. Over-generosity is often a sign of weak-mindedness, and many people who will scatter tips broadcast rather than be thought mean, will haggle over the stamp on the housemaid's Insurance card.

Indiscriminate generosity is often very much abused, as a certain soft-hearted girl discovered when, having presented some really serviceable blouses to a wailing charwoman, whose daughter was in urgent need of warm raiment, she encountered them a few weeks later at a rummage sale, where she was assisting a friend.

Inquiry elicited the information that they had been given to her friend by the said charwoman, whose daughter had rejected them with the scornful remark that "she wasn't goin' to wear 'igh collars when all the other gals wore low necks, an' flannel blouses were sort of common, any'ow."

Almost worse than the over-generous girl is Miss Skinflint, who reads the news off her neighbours' papers in the train rather than expend a modest halfpenny, and always contrives to be out of the way when the box comes round for a fellow-worker's wedding present. She is never seized with spasms of glorious extravagance; she never squanders her substance on a flimsy and enchanting blouse when she ought to be saving for a mackintosh, and if she has unlawful leanings towards booked seats at the theatre or an occasional taxi, she suppresses them sternly.

Nina was a maiden of strictly economical tendencies. She bought all her clothes at sales, and was familiar with the geography of all the bargain basements in London. Upon one historic occasion, however, her economy was her undoing.

Bound for a sale at her favourite West End shop, she elected to walk and save the penny 'bus fare, and arrived only to discover that the navy-blue costume upon which she had set her heart had just been snapped up. The assistant, a persuasive person sheathed in black satin, achieved a miracle and coerced her into purchasing a purple costume at the cost of an extra five shillings.

It was not until Nina had handed over the precious coins that she realised that the blue silk blouse and blue feathered hat she had meant to wear with the navy costume would look appalling if wedded to the purple.

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Chastened in spirit she fell an easy prey to the designs of the elegant damsel at the blouse counter, who, with the air of conferring a dukedom, sold her an unserviceable white silk at 5s. 11d., and directed her to the millinery department, where she expended a reluctant half-crown on a purple wing for her hat.

On the way home she indulged in a little mental arithmetic, and made the dismal discovery that the saving of a penny 'bus fare had resulted in an extra expenditure of 13s. 5d.

There is perhaps no one more disturbing to one's peace of mind than the over-cheerful person who lives in a tornado of good spirits, and expects you to go about your duties with a six-inch smile and the boisterous breeziness of a sailor on the spree.

There are times when a brief spell of undisturbed grousing is a good safety-valve, but the over-cheerful girl will have none of it; she bursts in upon your melancholy with her hilarious prattling, until your desire for suicide changes to a mad lust for murder, and you clench your hands lest you should be tempted to brain her with the poker.

The over-helpful girl is ofen a thorn in the flesh, and her intentions are so obviously good-natured that it is extremely difficult to suppress her.

While you are debating the cut of a blouse she will seize scissors and pattern, and slice up your material beneath your very eyes, while the mere mention of the fact that your last spring hat needs retrimming will send her scudding upstairs to return with the hat in one hand and the trimming—ripped out on the way—in the other.

Bertha was a girl of this type; it was when she was staying with a newly-married friend that her officiousness led to dire results.

It happened that the dining-room cushion covers were blue, whereas, in Bertha's opinion, they should have been purple. Left alone in the flat one day she was rummaging in the work cupboard when she discovered a length of purple satin.

Instantly concluding that her friend had decided to adopt her suggestion, she ripped off the blue covers and commenced a violent onslaught on the purple satin, only to find when her hostess returned that she had cut up the material intended for a new evening dress.

After her hostess had expressed her feelings in somewhat forcible terms, the atmosphere became so frigid that Bertha found it advisable to terminate her visit next day, and departed, leaving her friend to mourn over the purple fragments, not one of which would have made a decent sized duster.

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PINCH IS STILL GOING STRONG. DON'T MISS THIS STORY ON ANY ACCOUNT.

A FEW PROPOSALS.

By Pearson Choate.

Pinch is an old friend. If you know him, you will hail this story with rapture; if not, the sooner you make his acquaintance the better. As a provider of sensation and excitement, he is unequalled, nor is he less successful in the difficult *rôle* of matchmaker.

I.

Miss Grace Burgoyne was approaching that most difficult crisis in a woman's life, when, unwilling to acknowledge that she has become an old maid, she refuses to give her correct age even on the Census paper. Mr. John Burgoyne, solicitor of Lincoln's Inn Fields, had kept a watchful eye on his orphan niece's interests for something over thirty years. Grace herself was only prepared to admit twenty-six of these years.

Some women at this critical stage in their career resign themselves prematurely to good works. Others prefer the more modern and livelier distractions of window-smashing and incendiarism. Grace selected yet another alternative. She took to water-colour painting, combined with the simple life, in a pleasant little studio-flat in Chelsea.

A satisfactory private income, drawn from investments in Consols, renders the simple life a comparatively easy proposition. Miss Grace Burgoyne enjoyed this advantage, and it enabled her to be very thorough. Not only did she regulate her diet according to the dictates of the strictest sect of vegetarians, but she also had the courage to adopt a style of dress based on the models of ancient Greek sculpture.

Stockingless feet shod with sandals, and a sleeveless, flowing robe of art serge were the principal features of her toilette. People raised their eyebrows significantly when Grace, thus clad, passed them in the street' but not a few of them admired her. A good figure, classical features, beautiful hands and feet, and a crown of abundant auburn hair are charms sufficient to excuse the most unusual costume.

Proof of this was forthcoming in the fact that several men had been prepared to adore Grace, in spite of her eccentricities. But she refused to accept their worship. Man with a capital "M" either annoyed or bored her.

"I can do nothing with her, sir—nothing," Mr. John Burgoyne would lament, when discussing his niece with a legal crony. "She refuses the most eligible offers. Madness! In these days when men are no longer proposing right and left, a girl cannot afford to be too fastidious. She has views—think of it, views!"

Since there existed no particular reason why she should work at all, Miss Grace Burgoyne was one of the most industrious art students in Chelsea. She did much sketching in the open. Favourite ground with her were the London parks, and a certain bright afternoon in the late autumn, for example, found her at work in Kensington Gardens. There was a particular vista of grass and trees, near the Serpentine, which she was determined to paint in autumn colours.

She had set up her easel at this point in

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the Gardens in the morning. The fading light of the hour before sunset showed her still hard at work. She had become engrossed in her sketch; it was that rare time with her, known to all artists, the happy day when work is easy and nothing goes wrong.

"The sketch is not bad—not at all bad—but how far it falls short of the original. It is a very beautiful picture—that original. Nature beats you all every time. You can none of you come up to her originals."

Grace glanced round quickly. The speaker was standing close beside her. He was a short, rotund little man, immaculately dressed, and of a round and shining countenance. He met her gaze with merry blue eyes which twinkled behind a pair of large, gold-rimmed spectacles, as, smiling blandly, he raised his hat, and bowed with an easy deference which had in it a subtle suggestion of humorous mockery.

"Allow me to introduce myself in form," said he. "I am Pinch, Silas Q. Pinch, the Sensationalist, Master of the Art of the Unexpected, Everybody's Uncle, the Joy of Mayfair, the Great Pinch, the Maddest Joke of the Century, the One and Only Silas Q.—in a word—Pinch.

"Pinch provides sensations new and strange for the phlegmatic; adventures gay and unexpected for the weary; and unusual experiences for the *blasé*—all on the most reasonable terms. Pinch shows the wise the uses of folly, and the foolish the blessings of wisdom. Pinch is the universal theorem, proving the livableness of life.

"He is delighted to meet Miss Grace Burgoyne. It has been the object of his life—for the last six hours—to make the acquaintance of that charming young lady. Miss Grace Burgoyne stands in great need of Pinch."

"You know me?" stammered Grace, astonished.

"It is the business of the Sensationalist to know everybody and everything."

The odd little man's strange familiarity disconcerted Grace; she made a pretence of resuming her painting. For his part, Pinch was entirely at his ease. He found a chair, placed it beside her, and sat down. Then he produced his cigar-case, selected a cheroot, lit it, and smoked for some minutes without speaking. Grace went on with her painting erratically. She was nervous, and the proximity of Pinch proved disturbing.

"I feel that it is a pity," Pinch said at length. "Yes. That is the phrase—a pity."

Grace remained silent.

"I said that I feel that it is a pity," Pinch repeated deliberately.

The repetition was too much for Grace.

"What is a pity?" she asked.

"It is a pity that you should exhibit yourself in public in your present ridiculous garb, and spend your time painting absurdly inadequate pictures in water-colours."

Grace looked round at the little man with a haughty toss of her head which was meant to be crushing.

"Really, there is no particular excuse for your folly," Pinch proceeded imperturbably. "It is not as if your personal appearance was altogether despicable."

In spite of herself Grace laughed. It was impossible to resent this remarkable stranger's astounding impertinence.

"What you want," Pinch announced judicially, "is a husband."

"I have been looking for one for years," Grace retorted ironically. Pinch chuckled.

"Such candour is disarming," he said suavely. Irony was a useless weapon against Pinch. "I will find you what you seek. What kind of man do you like? My powers are unlimited. Pinch accepts Miss Grace Burgoyne as his client. The Sensationalist can very easily adjust his operations to the requirements of the Matchmaker. There will be a certain piquancy in combining the newest of all professions with one of the oldest; the idea attracts me. Pinch will provide Miss Grace Burgoyne with a husband of her own choice. What kind of man shall he be, this Ideal Husband? What are the necessary qualifications?"

Grace, avoiding any reply to the little man lest it should merely serve to provoke his impertinence further, began to pack up her brushes. The light had failed; the sun was setting. Birds, seeking roosting places for the night, flew from tree to tree. The Gardens were already deserted.

Grace realised that the impudent little man at her side would not leave her, and so decided that she must leave him. He would hardly presume so far on her forbearance as to follow her. She folded up her easel. "You choose a strange way of amusing yourself, sir," she remarked coldly.

Pinch smiled.

"My own amusements are tame when compared with the amusements which I provide for my clients," he said with a rich chuckle. "You are annoyed. How foolish of you. But I forgive you. You are my client. Prepare to receive suitors. You shall have infinite variety of choice. *Au*

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revoir. You will know me better in a day or two. Meanwhile, Silas Q. salutes you."

Grace turned away impatiently and set off across the Gardens. She was relieved to find that the strange little man did not follow her. Pinch remained seated where she had left him. When she looked round for the last time to make sure that she had finally escaped him, he kissed his plump and perfectly gloved hand to her. She fancied that she could hear him chuckling.

II.

The studio-flat which Miss Grace Burgoyne had converted into a temple of the simple life, was on the second floor of Marvell Mansions, a handsome building, facing the Chelsea Embankment, with windows commanding that view of the Thames which would appear to be essential to art work. Grace lived here alone with Smith, a single servant, to wait upon her. A staid and matronly woman of the type sufficiently described as "superior," Smith represented a concession Grace had made to the old-fashioned prejudices of her uncle. Smith filled the dual *rôle* of watch-dog and maid.

Smith was an impeccable servant. Ordinarily, she contrived to shield her mistress from all domestic worries. Consequently it was with some surprise as well as irritation that Grace, on the morning following her encounter with the strange Pinch in Kensington Gardens, looked up from her easel when Smith, soon after breakfast, entered her studio and launched forth into an incoherent story about the greengrocer's man.

"He is in the hall, miss. He brought the potatoes for lunch. He says he won't go away without seeing you. I've told him that you never see tradespeople. He says that he knows you are haughty, but he likes you the better for that—he's haughty himself. He isn't the regular man. It can't be the bill. I paid it only last week. He isn't drunk. Quite the gentleman with it all."

Grace, exasperated beyond measure, her brushes still in her hand, swept out of the studio, followed by the flustered Smith. In the little hall of the flat stood a man, whose green apron and capacious wicker basket full of fruit and vegetables were ample warranty of his trade. His hair was a vivid red. The expression of his face was boldly knowing. He had an impudent eye.

"What do you want?" Grace asked shortly.

"You," replied the greengrocer's man dramatically. "I love you. Do not spurn me on account of my humble origin and calling. Long have I kept my passion secret. Now I must declare myself. Will you honour me by becoming my wife?"

For a moment Grace was too astonished to move or speak. Then she saw light. The strange Pinch, she realised in a flash, must be behind this grotesque insult. The extraordinary little man had said, "Prepare to receive suitors." Here was one. A greengrocer's man who employed the phraseology of the novelette was a palpable impertinence.

A gasp of horror from the outraged Smith spurred Grace to action. She moved swiftly towards the umbrella-stand. A riding-whip was the best answer to this nonsense. Quick as she was, the greengrocer's man was quicker. He turned hastily and darted out of the flat, and disappeared down the staircase outside before Grace could reach him.

Utterly unable to meet the inquiring eye of the dumbfounded Smith, Grace returned to her easel in the studio. There was a good working light; the morning must not be wasted. She settled down to her work again. A little time passed; then Smith threw open the studio door.

"The piano-tuner, miss," she explained apologetically.

There entered a lean, swarthy, long-haired, velvet-coated individual, who bowed low to Grace in the manner of the concert platform.

Grace put down her brushes. The pianoforte stood in the studio. Doubtless the instrument required tuning, but she, at any rate, need not remain in the room to suffer the agonies of the process. She moved towards the door.

"Ah! Do not go," implored the piano-tuner, fixing her with a languishing look from his dark eyes. "To gain a little bitter bread I have resigned myself to the base mechanics of music, but I also am an artist. I will play to you the *Rosemonde* of Schubert as you have never heard it played before. Between two artists there need be no reserve. I will lay bare my soul to you. I adore you. You are my star. Will you be my wife?"

Grace fled. There are some situations which cannot be faced.

This was one of them. She dashed out of the flat, down the staircase of Marvell Mansions, and out on to the Embankment. Her brain was in a whirl. Pinch, the greengrocer's man, Smith, the piano-tuner—everybody had conspired against her to mortify and exasperate her.

Bareheaded, her flowing Grecian robe

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flapping in the wind, Grace hurried along the Embankment, rage in her heart. The thing was monstrous, far beyond a jest. Who was Pinch that he should dare to plague her? Why had he selected her as his butt? She did not even know him. What did his outrageous behaviour mean? How had he contrived to suborn the two lunatics who had insulted her, within a quarter-of-an-hour, in her own home? The whole affair was inexplicable.

Grace walked some distance. Then she paused to take breath. Resting her arms on the Embankment wall, she gazed at the river, striving to find in the familiar view a sedative for the fever of her thoughts.

An old man, wearing the long red coat of a pensioner of the Royal Chelsea Hospital, with a row of war medals on his chest, white-bearded and infirm, leaning heavily on a walking-stick, passed by, looked at Grace curiously, and then approached her.

"You seem to me to be in trouble, my dear," said this ancient warrior. "If an old man who has fought for his country and is still game, although he is no longer as young as he once was, can help you, he is at your service. Let me halve your troubles and double your joys. Marry me. An old man makes an easy husband. There is life in the old dog yet——"

"What do you want?" Grace asked shortly. 'You," replied the greengrocer's man dramatically. "I love you. . . . Will you honour me by becoming my wife?"

Grace turned with a little cry of dismay, withered the old pensioner with one swift glance of unspeakable indignation, and then fled blindly along the Embankment. Nowhere, apparently, was she safe from Pinch. The little man's satellities were clearly ubiquitous. She wandered up and down the Embankment for some time; then she decided to return to the flat. There, at least, she could lock her door, and tell Smith to refuse admittance to all visitors.

On regaining Marvell Mansions, Grace, breathless and agitated, entered the lift which served the building.

"Second floor," she gasped to the lift-man.

"And fourth proposal," retorted the lift-man quickly, as he set the lift in motion. "There is no time for beating about the bush. Will you marry me? A proposal in a lift must of necessity be curt——"

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Grace put her hands over her ears. She could bear no more. To her infinite relief the man stopped the lift at the second floor, and flung open the door. She dashed out of the lift into her own flat. Smith met her in the hall and babbled of the departure of the piano-tuner, but she did not pause to listen to her. She made for the studio, locked the door, and sank down, exhausted, into the nearest chair.

A few minutes passed. Then the telephone bell rang in the room. Mechanically, Grace rose to her feet, crossed to the instrument, and picked up the receiver.

"Is that Miss Grace Burgoyne?"—"Yes"—A rich chuckle—"This is Pinch. Will the suitors do?"

Grace pulled herself together with a great effort.

"This nonsense must stop at once, Mr. Pinch," she said. "It is monstrous, intolerable. I am very angry."

"That is perverse of you," Pinch replied, laughing maliciously. "Four proposals in one morning, and angry! Believe me, there are girls who do not enjoy so many opportunities in as many seasons. You must remember that when a man asks a woman to marry him he pays her the greatest compliment in his power. For further particulars see any novel. Even a greengrocer's man——"

Grace put down the receiver. Then a new idea occurred to her. She returned to the instrument hastily.

"Mr. Pinch."

"Still here," chuckled Pinch.

"If this nonsense does not stop," Grace said hotly, "I shall complain to my uncle. He is a solicitor. He will know what to do——"

"Good idea," purred Pinch. "A solicitor! Consult uncle by all means. Is a proposal of marriage an offence within the meaning of any Act? That will be a pretty problem for an authority on case law——"

Grace left the telephone. She had heard more than enough.

The idea of applying to her uncle for protection against the mortifying indignities under which she was suffering had occurred to Grace on the spur of the moment, but the more she thought of the extraordinary dilemma in which she was placed, the more favour it won with her. Mr. John Burgoyne was eminently astute. He might be able to divine the motive of the audacious Pinch in his atrocious manœuvres, and so end the annoyance. Without waiting for lunch, Grace left the flat, and set out for Lincoln's Inn Fields.

She crossed London on the top of a motor omnibus. Her journey was not without its incident. In Victoria Street a curate boarded the 'bus, and took the half seat beside Grace, who regarded him distrustfully. Thanks to Pinch she was beginning to suspect every man who approached her. Her fear was well grounded.

"I am unwilling to appear impertinent. I hope you will pardon me. I must speak to you," said the curate suddenly to Grace. "You are the very image of a dear, dear friend of mine who is now dead. I loved her. In seeing you—the likeness is amazing—I can hardly restrain my emotion. I feel as Dante must have felt when he saw Beatrice in Paradise.

"It is not, I am convinced, by accident that we have met like this. I long to know you—to win your esteem—your love. My name is Collins. I am curate-in-charge of the mission church of Mickley, Hants. May I know your name? It was written that we should meet, and go through life together, side by side. Become Mrs. Collins——"

Grace shook with anger. The people on the neighbouring seats were observing her and the curate narrowly. The unconventional dress which Grace wore invariably attracted attention, and this, combined with the vivid pantomime of the curate, as he illustrated his emotions with expressive gestures, drew the eyes of all the passengers upon them.

"If you do not go away at once," Grace whispered, with concentrated indignation, "I will stop the 'bus and tell the conductor to call a policeman."

"I am misunderstood," said the curate sadly. "I am always misunderstood."

He left the 'bus at the next stopping-place.

A clerk received Miss Grace Burgoyne at the office of Burgoyne & Chivers in Lincoln's Inn Fields, and showed her into the waiting-room with the respect due to his principal's niece. A few minutes passed. Then another clerk entered the room.

"Mr. Burgoyne is still out at lunch. He left a message to say that he would probably not be returning to the office to-day," said this clerk. "Is your business pressing, Miss Burgoyne? Is there anything that I can do for you in Mr. Burgoyne's absence?" He paused and looked at Grace strangely. This was a distinctly good-looking clerk, uncommonly well dressed. "I would give

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It was early morning when Grace awoke. She was conscious of a blinding light shining full on her face. She sat up hastily in her chair. (*Page* 32, *col.* 2.)

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anything to serve you," he went on, becoming, in a moment, greatly excited. "It is the Life Force. There is such a thing as immediate attraction. I love you—I adore you—madly, passionately."

Grace hardly knew how she got out of the office. Somehow she escaped. In Lincoln's Inn Fields she hailed a taxi-cab. She wanted privacy. She wanted time to think.

"Anywhere," she told the driver wildly.

The man saw her into the cab and drove off.

Grace did not know what to think. She doubted her own sanity, doubted the reality of her amazing experience. She was beginning to fear Pinch. That he should be able to reach her in her uncle's office seemed an impossibility. And yet somehow, he had contrived to do so. It was uncanny. What did it all mean? How would it end? She was very angry, of course, and at the same time she was amused. The humour of the situation was undeniable. She smiled as she realised this.

"In its way it is very comical," she exclaimed. Then she laughed hysterically.

Grace remained in the cab for a couple of hours. During that time she was driven in and out of the West End streets and round the Park, oblivious of her surroundings. Ultimately she regained her composure sufficiently to decide to return to Chelsea, and to give the necessary order to the driver. On reaching the Chelsea Embankment she dismissed the cab, and proceeded to walk the rest of the way to Marvell Mansions. She did this deliberately. She wished to discover if she had escaped Pinch by her erratic movements.

The early autumn twilight was falling. It was pleasant on the Embankment. The sun had set; across the river, lights shone out golden, here and there, in the dusk. Unconsciously, forgetting the annoyances of her strange day, Grace loitered to enjoy the freshness and colour of the evening. The lamplighter passed along the Embankment, and Grace watched him, fascinated. It was as if each lamp he lit added yet another link to a glittering chain of fire. In his progress the lamplighter approached Grace.

"Cheer-o!" said he, flourishing his long pole of office at her jovially. "Are you on the look-out for a nice, steady young man? Fifteen bob a week at this game, five bob pension, and a flat in Battersea with me. Is it a deal?"

Grace was caught, after all, off her guard. She did not speak.

"Perhaps I have been too sudden," said the lamplighter. "There is no hurry. Think it over."

And he passed on.

Pinch had scored again.

"The seventh," Grace murmured. Then she returned to Marvell Mansions.

The evening at the flat proved full of interest. A number of telegrams and express messages were delivered in quick succession at the door. Passionate in tone, the messages were all addressed to Grace, and purported to come from her distracted suitors. From the greengrocer's man to the lamplighter, not one of her strange wooers was forgotten.

Grace found reading the messages a merry diversion; she was beginning to enjoy the jest of which she was the victim. After all, she reflected, no great harm had been done, and it was really intensely amusing. The staid and matronly Smith took an altogether different view of the matter to that of her mistress, however. When that impeccable servant appeared in the studio with the sixth telegram delivered at the flat within half-an-hour she unburdened her mind.

"I am very sorry, miss. I don't like these goings on. I have always lived in respectable families," said Smith. "I must leave at the end of the month. I give you notice. I have my character to consider——"

Grace did not trouble to answer her.

Smith, outraged propriety expressed in every line of her severe features, retired for the night early. Grace herself did not go to bed. She had a premonition that the amazing Pinch had not yet played the last hand in his absurd and inexplicable game. About midnight, exhausted by the events of her wild day, she fell asleep in her chair in the studio.

It was early morning when Grace awoke. She was conscious of a blinding light shining full on her face. She sat up hastily in her chair.

"I thought that would stir you."

Grace looked about her.

"That is better. I want somebody to talk to. The great drawback of my profession is that one is denied the pleasures of social intercourse in business hours."

The speaker was a tall, well-built man, wearing evening dress, who stood facing Grace, smiling at her genially. He was strikingly handsome, and his smile was charming. Grace felt drawn to him at once; she was not in the least startled. She smiled. This, she realised, must be another illustration of the audacity of the amazing Pinch.

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"You smile. May I know why?" the man asked.

"I was thinking of Mr. Silas Q. Pinch."

The man extinguished the light in a dark lantern which he was carrying.

"Silas Q. Pinch! An odd name," he murmured. "Is he anybody? Is he received—socially, you know?"

Grace laughed. Her handsome visitor's air of innocence was provocative.

"May I smoke?" he asked.

"Certainly. The whisky is on the sideboard by the door. Do you mind looking after yourself? Make yourself comfortable; it was good of you to call."

A look of genuine astonishment showed on his face for a moment. Then he crossed the room to the sideboard, and helped himself to a whisky and soda, as Grace had suggested.

"I drink to the coolest woman I have ever met," said he, smiling at Grace over his glass. "There is nothing the matter with your nerves."

Grace was gratified.

"After what has happened to-day," she said, "I don't think that I shall ever be surprised by anything. The unexpected has become a commonplace."

He re-crossed the studio, and sat down near her.

"But do you realise what I am?" he asked. "Apparently not. You have read about the swell cracksman. I am he. By the way, I do not think much of your plate."

"Really? How interesting," Grace replied quietly. "Do tell me about your life."

She was determined to enter into the spirit of the grotesque jest in which she had become so mysteriously involved, and meet her antagonist with his own weapon of inconsequential impertinence.

The handsome man in evening dress looked unfeignedly annoyed. Then he tried a new line of attack. He glanced at his watch.

"It is now three o'clock in the morning," said he. "Do you realise what my presence in your room—alone with you—at three o'clock in the morning means?"

Grace winced. Here was a home-thrust. She had not thought of this aspect of the position.

"You must have come in unobserved," she stammered. "You can go out in the same way as you came in."

"If I so choose."

"I can see that you are a gentleman," Grace went on. She refused to be beaten. "Whatever may be the meaning of your visit, I do not believe that you would injure me."

"'Pon my soul, I don't think I could," he murmured.

Then he rose suddenly to his feet. His manner was startlingly serious.

"I have compromised you. I offer you the only reparation in my power," he said. "You must marry me. You have appealed to my better nature. As a gentleman——"

Grace laughed, relieved. Pinch *was* behind this final absurdity.

"The eighth and the best," she declared. "You have done it charmingly."

A smile, instantly suppressed, flickered across his lips. Then he threw out his hands with an eloquent gesture of resignation.

"I will go," he said. "I meant well."

Picking up his hat and coat, which lay on a chair beside him, he walked to the door.

"I thought you wanted somebody to talk to," Grace remarked demurely. He paused, seemed about to speak, and then, changing his mind, passed out of the room.

"Can you manage the front door?" Grace called out after him.

"I have a skeleton key," he replied, from the outer darkness of the hall. "That was how I came in. Good night."

And he disappeared.

Alone in the studio, Grace stood for a moment, with an odd little smile on her lips.

"A fascinating man. He is altogether too good-looking," she murmured. "I should like to know him."

By the time Grace went to bed it was already day. She slept far into the morning. It was near noon when Smith woke her with the offer of a belated breakfast tray. As she drank her coffee, Grace reviewed the grotesque events of the previous day with keen appreciation, especially the night visit of the swell cracksman. Was the jest finished? Would the amazing Pinch continue the game? Then a flash of inspiration came to Grace. Why should not she take a hand? Her unusual dress made her conspicuous. If she adopted more conventional clothes she might be able to hoodwink Pinch and his satellites, and that would be amusing. A hurried search in her wardrobe produced a gown, out of date, but still presentable, which she had discarded when she adopted the mode of ancient Greece. A hat, boots, and furs were also forthcoming.

She dressed hastily; as she eyed herself critically in her mirror, she realised that the

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old gown and hat suited her. She almost felt tempted to interview a modiste and a milliner. Madame Roselle, of Regent Street, she reflected, would be glad to see her again. She would slip out of Marvell Mansions, and leave Chelsea, and thus attired she would probably escape Pinch. She would go to the West End. She felt in the mood for a holiday.

Grace left the flat stealthily; she did not wish to face Smith in her changed dress. Down in the vestibule of the building a gentleman cannoned into her. He fell back at once and apologised.

"I beg your pardon——"

Grace smiled. The swell cracksman of the previous night stood before her. He was dressed with obvious particularity and elegance, and in his hand he carried a large bunch of roses. For a moment he did not recognise her. Then he smiled.

"By Jove, I am glad!" he said. "I was just going to call on you. I did not know you at first. Forgive me. You have modernised your toilette by a few centuries, and that misled me. Are you in a hurry? I have my car outside; can I run you out anywhere?"

"I was just going to Regent Street to look at the shops," Grace murmured.

"I shall be happy to set you down there," he said.

Leading her out into the street, he handed her into a luxurious motor-brougham which stood waiting, drawn up by the pavement.

"Regent Street," he said to the chauffeur.

It was not until the car had moved off that Grace realised she had intrusted herself to a man whose name even was unknown to her.

In the car he turned to her with his engaging smile and held up his roses.

"I was just going to call on you to apologise," he said, "and to ask you to accept these roses as a peace offering."

"If you want pardon, you must make full confession of your fault," replied Grace. "I do not think that you will find me a very harsh judge."

"I hardly know how to begin," he murmured. "My name is Marion. I am Clement Marion, the actor. You must know my name—it is on all the hoardings. Perhaps you have seen me play. It was Pinch who let me in for this—confound him! Pinch is the most amazing and whimsical little man I know. I helped him in another affair a few months ago; he came to me the other day and said he wanted me again. He had a new plant on, and he said that I was the only man who could see him through.

"He told me his scheme, and it struck me as being a rich jest. There was a girl whom Pinch said he wanted to shake up. I agreed to do my part. Pinch pays me, of course, but it was the fun of the thing, not the money that attracted me."

He paused.

"How can I explain it?" he went on. "You were the girl. I was the greengrocer's man, the piano-tuner, the old pensioner, the liftman, the curate, the clerk, the lamplighter, and the swell cracksman. It was a great show. I usually play in romantic comedy, you know, and it was a change to appear in broad farce. I enjoyed it immensely. But last night I thought that it was a bit too bad. And this morning I felt that I must come and ask you to forgive me."

"But how did you manage it all?" Grace cried in astonishment. "I guessed that it was acting, but I never dreamt that it was all by one man."

Marion smiled.

"Thank you for your charming compliment on my performance," he said. "Really, it was absurdly easy. Pinch arranged it all. He told me what parts I had to play, and gave me an idea of the business. All I had to do was to play as he directed. It resolved itself into what is known on the halls as a Protean act. Pinch ran me round with my dresser in his car; I dressed in the car for the various characters, and appeared when Pinch gave me my cue.

"We improvised one or two of the characters at the shortest notice. Pinch squared the real greengrocer, liftman, and lamplighter to let me take their places. The little man never lost sight of you from start to finish. There was a decent interval between each of my appearances, so I had plenty of time for dressing. My only trouble was with my patter—I had to gag. And I am bound to admit that I found eight distinct proposals to the same girl in a single day rather a strain on my vocabulary."

There was a brief silence. Grace was marvelling at the ingenious simplicity of the wild jest.

"Is it peace?" Marion asked, proffering his roses.

"I cannot be angry with you," Grace replied with a sudden happy little laugh. "You were led away by the wicked Pinch. As a matter of fact, looking back at it now, it occurs to me, too, that I have enjoyed it all hugely."

And she took the roses.

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A rich, melodious chuckle brought them to their senses and back to earth. . . . It was the Great Pinch. He had approached them noiselessly, and now stood by their table. (*Page 36, col. 1.*)

"It is generous of you to see it that way," Marion said. "It was great fun," he added with a reflective smile. "You can have no idea how charming you looked in your quaint dress—and you were so angry."

There was another brief silence.

"Here we are in Regent Street?" Marion said suddenly. "Suppose we dine together to-night? We ought to improve on our unusual acquaintanceship."

"I should like that," replied Grace.

* * * * *

Marion was known at The Carlton.

"The usual table, Mr. Marion?" the restaurant manager asked.

"And a special dinner," said Marion.

The handsome actor manager made a delightful host. He was famous on the stage as the perfect gentleman, and Grace realised that he did not leave his charm and distinction of manner with his make-up in his dressing room. She was flattered and fascinated by his attentions. Incidentially she completely forgot her vegetarian principles and made an excellent dinner.

"A great idea has occurred to me," Marion announced as, dinner finished, they lingered in the restaurant. "You and I must conspire to get back on the shameless Pinch. There is only one way to do it; you must marry me. That would be a knock-out blow for Pinch. He warned me that you were dangerously attractive, and that I must be careful. What do you say?"

"I say with Mr. Pinch that you must be careful, Mr. Marion," Grace replied with a laugh. "You are no longer playing a part, remember. I may take you seriously."

"Confound it, I am serious. This is the real thing," Marion said. "You must take me seriously." He smiled whimsically even in his gravity. "I have proposed to you so many times in jest that when I propose in earnest you won't listen to me! I am in deadly earnest; you are the most fascinating woman I have ever met, and I nearly gave

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myself away last night. I love you. Now I have met you I want you all to myself. I hardly know you, but I am mastered, bewitched. It is a surprise to me, I own; I keep nothing back from you. I have never had this feeling about any woman before. I think I could win your love. Will you marry me?"

Grace was amazed and nearly carried off her feet.

"If you were serious——" she stammered.

"You would say yes."

"Yes," whispered Grace.

"I am the happiest man in London," Marion declared fervently, and looked it.

"The ninth time of asking," he remarked a moment later, "has been lucky. It was absolutely unpremeditated and unrehearsed."

"In a public place—in a restaurant, too," Grace murmured demurely. "What will the waiters think?"

A rich, melodious chuckle brought them to their senses and back to earth.

"Good evening, Marion. I am charmed to meet you again, Miss Burgoyne."

It was the Great Pinch. He had approached them noiselessly, and now stood by their table, his shining countenance lit up by an all-embracing smile, regarding them with a mocking twinkle in his merry blue eyes.

Marion at once rose to his feet. He was eager to astonish the little man.

"We have got back on you, Pinch," he announced triumphantly. "Miss Burgoyne has just consented to be my wife."

Pinch did not speak, but his smile broadened a little, and his eyes shone a trifle brighter behind his big gold-rimmed spectacles, as he handed a slip of paper to Marion.

Marion glanced at the paper and then sat down again, heavily.

"I give you best, Pinch," he said.

He handed the paper to Grace. It was a special license authorising the marriage of Clement Marion and Grace Burgoyne.

"I secured the license with the aid of my good friend the Bishop of Brougham," Pinch remarked blandly. "I fancy he stretched a point in my favour in obtaining it for me. He also has been a client of the Sensationalist. He will be delighted to perform the ceremony."

"But how did you know that the license would be needed?" Marion gasped.

"Silas Q. never makes a mistake," the little man chuckled. "From the first our manœuvres were aimed to achieve this result. You must surely recognise now, Marion, that I had only to bring you and Miss Burgoyne together for you to fall in love with each other?"

Marion smiled appreciatively.

"That is so, Pinch."

"But how did it all begin, Mr. Pinch," Grace asked, voicing her last and deepest perplexity. "It has been a wonderful time, and the happy ending," she added, with a shy glance at Marion, "is most wonderful of all. But why was I chosen for your manœuvres?"

Pinch chuckled blithely.

"Mr. John Burgoyne, solicitor, of Lincoln's Inn Fields, who will this afternoon, I trust, write a cheque payable to Silas Q. Pinch for one hundred guineas," he replied suavely, "confided in me, the other day, as we sat smoking our cigars at the Athenæum, certain anxieties which troubled him about his charming niece, Miss Grace Burgoyne.

"I made it my business to meet Miss Grace Burgoyne. It seemed to me that she needed my services. I set myself to rouse her. I designed my little scheme to startle her out of herself. I felt that she was too charming a young lady to be wasted on vegetarianism, the simple life, and water-colour painting.

"The Sensationalist, as he promised, Miss Burgoyne, combined his operations with the machinations of the Matchmaker. You have had, I flatter myself, varied sensations! 'A marriage has been arranged'—You owe it all to your uncle, Mr. John Burgoyne. He knows and approves. It is he, at least, whom I expect to pay my little bill."

"You are indeed The Sensationalist, Mr. Pinch," Grace exclaimed, "the One and Only Pinch."

"And to-morrow," Marion announced happily, "we will go and buy the engagement ring."

"Bless you, my children!" chuckled Pinch.

(Next month Pinch provides more excitement for his many admirers, and scores another win in the great game of sensationalism, of which he is a past master.)

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WHEN MISS PARKER CAME HOME

The Strange Results of Her Visit to London.

By F. Morton Howard.

I.

Mr. Joseph Neave, setting down an empty wheelbarrow at the door of the tiny railway station, studied his watch with satisfaction and passed through to the platform.

"'Ullo, George!" he cried to the solitary porter. "'Ow are you, old sport?"

"'Ave you got your ticket?" countered the porter suspiciously.

"I ain't going," explained Mr. Neave. 'I've come to meet the three-forty. Doo soon, ain't it?"

"Doo soon it may be," replied the porter, with official reserve, "but that ain't to say it'll be in soon. Was you hexpecting anything by it?"

"Only my gal," was Mr. Neave's simple response.

"Ah, I wondered what you were wearing ivy leaves in your button-'ole for on a week-day. Been in service in London, ain't she?"

"She's 'eld a post in London," amended Mr. Neave importantly.

"What did she want to give notice for?" queried the porter, continuing his relentless catechism.

"She didn't exactly give notice. She more resigned. She's coming 'ome again to 'er father becos 'e wants 'er. 'E didn't want 'er to go, to start with, but there was no denying 'er. 'E told me that it was 'London — London — London' dinning in 'is ears morning, noon, and night, till it seemed to 'im that the very 'ens was cackling, 'I want to go to London' every time they laid an egg. Reg'lar daft on London, she was."

"I suppose you'll be getting married soon now, then?"

"That's the idea. Me and Ethel and 'er father are all going to live together in 'is cottage. It'll be nice for all of us."

"Well," said the porter, going off slowly, "I can't stand 'ere listening to your chatter all day. There's the three-forty coming in, and I 'aven't put the signal down for it yet."

The decrepit local train crawled in and squeaked and bumped protestingly to a standstill. Mr. Neave, with beaming countenance, held himself in readiness on the platform to embrace his returning sweetheart.

Some half-a-dozen passengers emerged with expressions of relief. The porter, after a sharp passage of words with the engine-driver on the subject of disregarded signals, entered the luggage van and sulkily cast out a tin trunk.

Meanwhile, the happy anticipation on Mr. Neave's face faded slowly to a look of alarm. All save one of the passengers had gone their

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ways out of the station, and the one that remained on the platform was a damsel of quite unfamiliar aspect and extremely smart appearance.

"Must 'ave missed it," reflected Mr. Neave ruefully, when the astonishing young lady, addressing him in tones of extreme refinement, asked him how he was.

"Blow me!" was all that he could gasp.

He bent forward, palms on knees, to peer more closely at her, his emotions indicated by the dropped jaw of incredulity, the round eyes of amazement.

"It *is* 'er!" he asserted, as though arguing with an invisible opponent. "It's Ethel! *Well*——!"

"Of course it's me," said Miss Parker, plainly flattered by this testimony to her altered appearance.

In a dull, stunned way Mr. Neave's gaze dwelt on the fashionable eccentricities of her hat, lingered to regard the unaccustomed elaboration of her hair, and passed on to note other details in this overwhelming vision.

Her very low cut collar gave a generous view of Miss Parker's neck, the protection of a bright bead necklace being apparently the only concession to the rigour of the climate. A skirt, evidently contrived by some person of economical ingenuity, restricted Miss Parker's movements so closely that, to Mr. Neave's untravelled mind, the slit upwards from the hem was clearly the result of an accident.

Mr. Neave dreamily scratched the base of his skull while he endeavoured to adjust himself to the circumstances.

"Oh, well," he said at last, "I'm real glad to see you back again, any'ow!"

With that he stepped forward to embrace her, but, to his surprise, found himself stiffly shaking hands with her.

"People don't go kissing all over the place," explained Miss Parker.

The porter, watching the incident, gave a mirthless, sardonic bark, and vanished, with a bang of the door, into the obscurity of his shed. Mr. Neave, not a little perplexed, went along the platform towards the tin trunk.

"Hi, is this yours?" he called out, stooping over it. "But it ain't got your name on it," he protested at her reply. "It's got 'Parker' on it all right, but the other name's 'Ethelly.'"

"Eth-ella," she corrected him. "I'm spelling it that way now."

Mr. Neave stood up to stare at her, and was evidently on the point of speech. Caution restraining him, he shouldered the tin trunk and led the way out of the station in silence

"I don't see a cab anywhere," murmured Miss Parker.

"*Cab!*" echoed Mr. Neave disgustedly. "No, and you won't see no omnibuses nor theatres nor Towers of London nor 'Ouses of Parliament 'ere, neither. This ain't London—this is the place where you was born and 'ave lived all your life. I've a-got the wheelbarrow 'ere. It's what took your box to the station, six months ago, and it's what's going to take your box 'ome again now."

He dumped the trunk into the barrow, grasped both handles fiercely and set off along the road. Miss Parker glanced round, as though a little fearful of being observed in such commonplace company, and then minced along by his side.

"Why, you haven't got on a collar!" she remarked suddenly.

"It's only Tuesday afternoon," he replied.

"It seems so funny to see a man going about without a collar," she explained. "In London——"

Mr. Neave groaned, and Miss Parker maintained an offended silence for some minutes.

"Don't the roads seem empty?" she vouchsafed at last.

"You never used to complain of that when we went out courting before you went away," he reminded her.

"Now, in the London streets, you can't hardly move for people," she said. "Carriages, and motor-cars, and——"

"P'r'aps you feel awkward now, walking by the side of a barrow?" he suggested cuttingly.

"Yes, I do," was her frank answer. "It's only what the common people do in London."

Mr. Neave set down his barrow to stare at her, but she tripped on briskly. Taking up his load again, he made no effort to catch up to her.

"And I was feeling awkward walking by the side of you," he muttered vindictively. "They won't 'arf come to their windows to stare at 'er!" he prophesied with gloomy satisfaction. "I'm well out of it."

Mr. Neave had rather underestimated the effect which his companion's advent was to have on the village. As she progressed up the main street people came, not to their windows, but to their very gates, to feast their eyes on the spectacle of the transformed Miss Parker.

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When she had strutted serenely by them, returning their greeting with a patronising and fleeting smile, they walked out into the centre of the road to watch the passing of the phenomenon.

Miss Parker had already been in her home some minutes when Mr. Neave at last turned the corner of the road where she lived. Fiercely cleaving a way with his barrow through the engrossed group which had gathered about the garden gate, he wheeled the trunk to old Parker's door.

Miss Parker's father, in a state of limp emotion, came out to him. The eyes of Mr. Parker rolled heavenward, his flat palms were exhibited in a gesture of helplessness.

"'Asn't been 'ome three minutes," he whispered to Mr. Neave, "and——"

"I know," said Mr. Neave sympathetically. "I've 'ad some."

"Kissed me, and, in the same breath, wanted to know what me slippers was doing on the kitchen table. Asked me when I shaved last, and told me she was going to 'ave the spare room for what she called a boodoor," catalogued Mr. Parker rapidly. 'Told me to go and brush my 'air, and wanted to know why I couldn't smoke cigars instead of a 'orrid old pipe. Said that in London——"

"Ah, I thought p'r'aps she'd mention London."

"And the way she's dressed, Joe! She didn't seem to like it a bit when I bust out laughing, but I couldn't 'elp it. Seems all them things 'ave been given 'er by the family she's been working for. And mighty glad they was to get rid of 'em, I dare say. And she's come back with a lot of their silly notions, besides their old clothes. Says she's going to alter things 'ere, till we're a bit smarter and more like London."

"Take 'er all 'er time," breathed Mr. Neave defiantly.

Miss Parker protruded her head from the window above.

"Will you please ask all those good people to go away from the gate, father?" she called out in clear accents. "They're only being what we call *de trop* in London."

At mention of the metropolis both men groaned, while the group of onlookers cheered and slapped knees in keen enjoyment.

"'Ere, I'm off!" announced Mr. Neave. "I feel as if a good long walk, all by myself, is the only thing that could do me any good."

II.

It was after breakfast the next morning that Mr. Neave and his prospective father-in-law met again. The expression on Mr. Parker's face was that of one who moves through a baffling, uncomfortable dream; his garments were remarkable for a week-day.

"Going anywhere special?" demanded Mr. Neave.

"No, I ain't," answered Mr. Parker shortly. "That's the silly part of it."

"But you've got on your Sunday clothes," pointed out Mr. Neave.

"She says," announced Mr. Parker in sepulchral tones, "that I've got to buy a top 'at. *And* gloves. *My* 'ands in gloves!"

"And what about shiny boots?"

"I've got 'em," said Mr. Parker, gazing drearily into the horizon. "She brought me a pair 'ome as a present. When I've got 'em on I feel as if I could never get 'em off again, and when I've got 'em off, it don't seem possible I could ever get 'em on again."

"And what're you 'olding your chin like that for?"

"My throat's a bit stiff," explained Mr. Parker. "Practising 'ow to talk proper. Close on two hours we 'ad of it last night. Listen! 'Ha-half—ho-home—ha-hang,'" he aspirated carefully, and not without a sort of gloomy pride. "'Ow—I mean h-how's that?"

"Sounds like hasthma," said Mr. Neave frankly. "And 'ow long are you going to put up with it?"

"I'll give 'er a week," replied Mr. Parker. "That'll give 'er plenty of time to wake up and find she ain't in London any more. And after that——"

"Well?"

"I don't know," weakly admitted Mr. Parker. "We shall have to do something, I suppose."

The allotted week passed, and was followed by a second week, and still Miss Parker continued in her amazing courses. The rigid discipline to which she subjected her sire had already earned for him a considerable meed of derision and contempt.

The facts that he no longer ventured abroad in shirt sleeves, and that he wore a collar and tie every day were considered a reflection on the sartorial standards of the village; the painfully acquired habit of shaving daily prompted many to point out to him that you could shave and shave and still not be like a man. And his top-hatted walk

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to church on Sunday was less a triumphal march than a pageant of ribaldry.

Further, Miss Parker's scheme of improvements was comprehensive, and included her home and her *fiancé* as subjects. The transformations she had effected in the humble abode of her father were striking and ingenious.

The legs of the battered old piano found themselves draped in the fabric of a superannuated curtain. Promiscuous bows of ribbon adorned the backs of all the chairs. The mantel-shelves bristled with an array of imperfect crockery rescued from the oblivion of the attic.

There were now, too, certain well-defined laws of behaviour to be observed indoors. Pipe-smoking, for instance, was only permitted in the wash-house; the donning of slippers had to be performed in the same obscurity.

Table napkins were provided at all meals, confusion between the use of knife or fork brought swift reprisals from Miss Parker, and the pouring of hot tea into saucers became an obsolete practice.

As significant details, it may be added that the legend, "Tradesmen's entrance," had been neatly painted on the side gate of the garden, that a card indicating "Out" or "In" now hung prominently in the passage just inside of the front door, and that no fewer than two papers purporting to contain society news were ordered for delivery at the Parkers' dwelling.

So the fortnight dragged by, and Mr. Parker was beginning to view, with more and more dismay, the prospect of a comfortless future, when Mr. Neave dragged him off one afternoon to a secret conclave.

The interview was long and earnest, but it ended on a note of optimism, and, after the conspirators had parted, Mr. Parker entered his home whistling blithely for the first time in fourteen days.

III.

At an early hour next day Mr. Neave had left the village, and stimulating rumours were going the rounds. That very morning, so said gossip, Mr. Neave had received a letter from London, bidding him call without fail at the earliest moment possible at the address of a firm of solicitors.

The natural inference was that Mr. Neave had been left a fortune, variously estimated at a hundred pounds, ten thousand pounds, or half a million, according to the generosity and imagination of the narrator.

Some three days passed, and then Miss Parker received an astounding epistle from Mr. Neave. He was, it seemed, staying in London, and at an hotel which, as the note-paper testified, rose to the heights of being in connection with the telephone, and supplied hot and cold baths

"It must come very expensive, stopping at a place like that," exclaimed Miss Parker in parenthesis.

"'E wouldn't do it if it wasn't worth 'is while," said old Parker. "You'd better read on."

Mr. Neave apologised for having departed without bidding Miss Parker farewell, but he would explain more fully when he returned. All he was writing for now, was to acquaint her with the tidings that he had come into a legacy, which, so to speak, instantly made a gentleman of him. Also, there was another big piece of news which he would tell her when he saw her, but, meanwhile, she could wonder how it must feel to have a real lord as great-great-grandfather.

"I always did think there was something superior about Joe," she whispered in awed accents, when she had assimilated this last item. "Fancy, a real lord in his family!"

"Ah, I expect 'e'll look down on us now," opined Mr. Parker sadly, concealing his relish of the circumstances.

Another twenty-four hours passed, and then an imperative telegram summoned Miss Parker to meet the three-forty train.

It was a transformed Mr. Neave who stepped this time from the carriage. A plush hat of adventurous curves crowned his head, a collar of extreme height encircled his neck, and the necktie he wore was of the pyrotechnic school of decorative art. A tweed coat and flannel trousers of extreme dogginess, pale yellow gloves, and vast brogues completed his outfit.

"Why, Joe!" screamed Miss Parker in tones wherein surprise and dismay mingled.

Mr. Neave, impressively producing a monocle, screwed it into his eye and surveyed his sweetheart.

"I thought I knoo the voice," he said "And 'ow are you, Miss Parker?"

He shook hands distantly with her, and together they left the station.

"You—you've got them all on," she said apprehensively, surveying his splendour.

"Just my—my travelling togs," he told her. "Of course, for the country it don't matter much 'ow you dress, do it?"

"Ain't you—ain't you afraid some of the boys'll laugh at you?"

"Let 'em dare to laugh at a Right Hon., that's all," threatened Mr. Neave darkly.

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"A—a Right Hon.?" she echoed. "You never mean to tell me——?"

"My lawyers says so."

She walked on in silence, cogitating over this development, till the village came in view. Two cronies of Mr. Neave's, after gurgling incredulously at him, began to walk backwards in advance of him, the better to gloat over his splendour.

"It makes me feel a bit awkward when they go on like that," she said.

"They'll get used to it," he declared condescendingly. "'Member 'ow they used to laugh at you when you first got back? They can't 'elp their manners."

"But I didn't look so—I wasn't as smart as you are."

"Just the same, we are," he asserted. "I see a picture of a gal dressed just like you in a book, and there was a picture of a chap with 'er, 'im supposed to be 'er sweetheart. So I just got the same clothes as 'im."

Miss Parker halted to survey Mr. Neave's appearance, and then walked on with manifest dissatisfaction.

Regardless of the excitement he was creating, Mr. Neave escorted Miss Parker to her parent's abode.

"'Ow do, Parker?" was Mr. Neave's patronising salute to her sire.

Regardless of the excitement he was creating, Mr. Neave escorted Miss Parker to her parent's abode. "'Ow do, Parker?" was Mr. Neave's patronising salute to her sire.

"Glad to see you back, Joe," said Mr. Parker.

"'Mister Neave, Hesquire,' to you," stiffly corrected the young man. "And 'Right Hon.,' too, when I 'ears from my solicitors."

Miss Parker led the way indoors and Mr. Neave brought his eyeglass into play again with marked effect.

"It seems funny to be back 'ere again," he said.

"'Funny?'" repeated Miss Parker with a note of asperity.

"Yes, after the hotel where I've been stopping. Now the rooms there really was smart and haristocratical. No silly himitations, mind you, but the real thing. Doormats both sides of the door, and so on."

"Pity you didn't stop there for good," said the huffed Miss Parker.

"I'm going to," announced Mr. Neave. "Later on."

Miss Parker started slightly.

"I feel I must 'ave the real thing," said Mr. Neave. "'Alf and 'alf himitations don't satisfy me."

"When I was in Maida Vale," began Miss Parker.

"Ah, that ain't really London," interrupted Mr. Neave with a pitying smile. "Now I

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stayed in the part what's called West End. You can't begin to talk about London really if you 'aven't stayed there."

"'Ow about tea?" queried Mr. Parker, with a glance at the clock.

"'Alf-past four!" exclaimed Mr. Neave. "What a funny time for tea! We always 'ave it at four in London."

"We 'ad dinner a bit late to-day," explained Mr. Parker. "'Alf-past one."

"We always 'ave it at one sharp in London," returned Mr. Neave. "And we calls it 'lunch' in London."

"*London!*" snapped Miss Parker, and went out of the room, closing the door with some violence.

The conspirators exchanged gratified winks.

The meal itself was scarcely a success, for Mr. Neave insisted on monopolising the conversation. Declining to speak about his own affairs, he gave them his views of London at considerable length.

"London—London—London!" bitterly exclaimed Miss Parker at length. "I'm tired of hearing its very name!"

"Up in London," pursued Mr. Neave, unheeding, "a chap can move in 'is proper circles. Of course, the folks round 'ere are all right, but as for real gents and ladies——"

He implied their absence with an eloquent gesture.

"We know our station," snapped Miss Parker, "and don't go trying to puff ourselves up."

She caught her father's quizzical gaze and for a few moments there was silence.

"Now, this 'ere suit I bought in London," resumed Mr. Neave.

"Do you mean to say that's a real fashion'ble suit?" demanded the lady.

"You and me are just a pair for fashion," said Mr. Neave.

Miss Parker rose and dragged her chair in front of the overmantel. Standing on the seat she studied her appearance closely and with growing mistrust.

"I ain't agoing to be a pair to a suit like that," she stated suddenly, and, hopping from the chair, she went upstairs.

Mr. Parker, rising, shook Mr. Neave's hand ceremoniously

"I do believe it's going to be the beginning of the end," prophesied Mr. Parker in delighted tones.

Half-an-hour elapsed before his daughter, neatly and becomingly attired in sober hues, stormily re-entered the room.

"In London——," Mr. Neave was saying.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, and began to clear the tea-table. This done, it seemed as if Miss Parker still wished to continue the clearing process. Gazing round, she defiantly removed the imperfect crockery from the mantelshelf, the drapery from the piano, and then halted. There was a short inward struggle, and then the bows of ribbon were rudely plucked from their perches and cast into the grate.

"I don't want to remind you of London more than can be helped," she explained. "And if you think I'm trying to imitate London——"

"You're only himitating Maida Vale," said Mr. Neave boldly, "not the real West End part. You couldn't do that if you tried."

"I don't want to try, thank you!" she retorted mutinously. "You and your London! The country's quite good enough for me!"

Mr. Parker, to hide his satisfaction at this sentiment, produced his pipe and tobacco pouch.

"You ain't ever going to smoke a common, low pipe in 'ere?" exclaimed Mr. Neave in scandalised tones. "They don't 'ardly ever smoke pipes in London, and never indoors when a lady's present."

"He shall smoke his pipe wherever he likes," declared Miss Parker in open rebellion. "And you shan't stop him, neither, with all your silly grand ideas!"

"Why, *you* yourself," protested Mr. Neave.

"Never mind about that!" she cried, momentarily nonplussed. "You come back here with a parcel of big notions and think we're just nobodies because we don't live in London. You dare to look down on us, and——"

"I should 'ave thought you'd 'ave liked to 'ear me talk like that," said Mr. Neave in an injured voice.

"If you only know 'ow silly it sounds!" she returned.

He did not attempt to press the argument, and Mr. Parker, emboldened, removed his collar and gave a grunt of satisfaction at the unaccustomed comfort.

"Where's your manners, Parker?" asked Mr. Neave sharply. "Going about without a collar in front of a lady!"

"You leave 'im alone!" shrilled Miss Parker. "He's in his own home, isn't he? You'd better go back to your old London if you don't like our ways."

"I suppose I shall 'ave to soon," he said.

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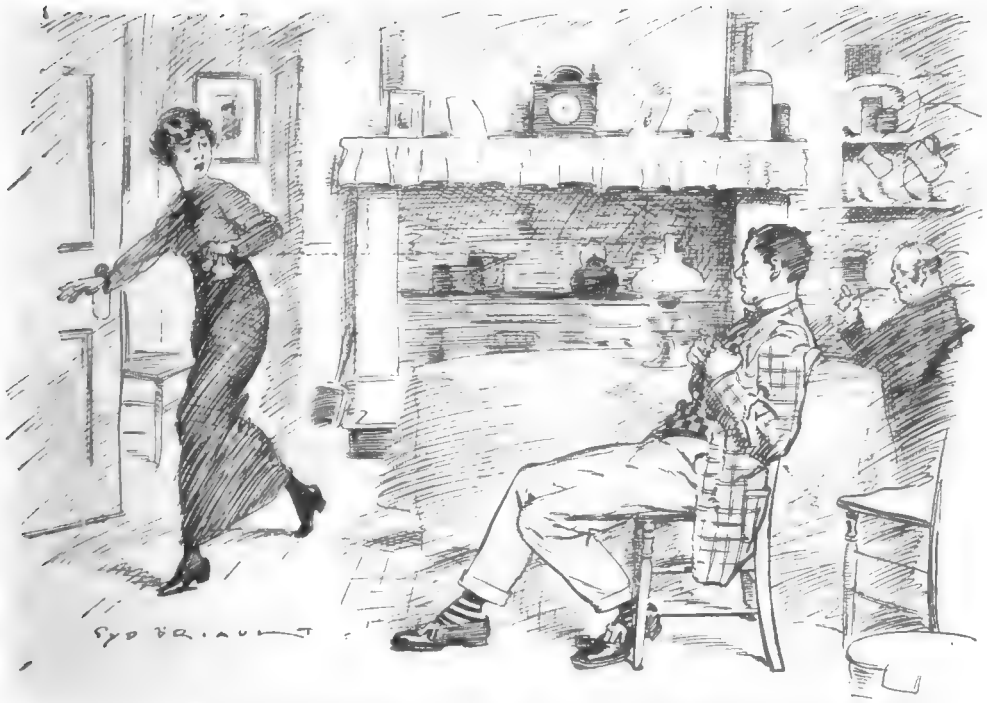

"I wish you was just plain Joe Neave, like you was before I went away. And I—I——" She said no more, but hurried tumultuously from the room, her handkerchief ready for action in her hand.

"I must be seeing about a wife. Of course, when I was nobody special it didn't matter 'oo I married. But my lawyers say that if I turn out to be a Right Hon. I shall 'ave to pick out a county gal at the least. That's the worst of being gentlefolks—you can't please yourself all the time. I've got my persition to consider."

For a long minute there was silence. Then Miss Parker, her voice soaring uneasily, addressed the young man.

"I—I wish you'd never come into money!" she cried. "I wish no one had ever found out you was descended from a lord! I wish you was just plain Joe Neave, like you was before I went away. And I—I——"

She said no more, but hurried tumultuously from the room, her handkerchief ready for action in her hand.

"That's done it, Joe!" said Mr. Parker. "I think she's 'ad 'er lesson now!"

"I'll be back in 'alf-an-hour," declared Mr. Neave departing.

He returned, wearing his old working-suit, to find Mr. Parker diplomatically absent upstairs, and Miss Parker sitting dejectedly over the fire.

"Now you knows what it feels like," he said awkwardly. "There wasn't a word of truth in what I've been talking about, but I meant it for a lesson. Close on four pounds ten it's cost me, one way and another, and I 'ope it ain't been wasted."

"Father's told me all about it," she said in a subdued voice. "I've been a silly, Joe, but I'm not going to be silly enough to go on being silly. I can understand now how foolish I've been carrying on. I thought to myself that if I was half as silly as you were this afternoon, the sooner I stopped the better. Come over me, all in a flash, it did, at tea-time, though I'd been feeling a bit uncertain-like ever since I met you at the station this afternoon."

"You ain't cross?" he asked a little anxiously.

"I ought to be, but I ain't," she answered sensibly. "And, oh, Joe! it was only when I thought I was going to lose you that I saw how much you was to me. And I saw that it only served me right."

"'Ere, we needn't talk about that any more," he said. "Come over and sit on my knee, and we'll talk about more sensible things."

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A SPLENDID NEW FEATURE.

By Courtesy of the Kalem Company.

Miss Anna Nilsson, the heroine of the following adventure.

Handshakes with Death

II.—FACING DEATH AMID THE ICE FLOES.

Another thrilling story of the dangers faced in the cause of the cinema, written by Margaret Chute, from the narrative of Miss Anna Nilsson, of the Kalem Company.

HAVE I ever shaken hands with death? Yes, indeed—more than once. Because I ride and swim, accidents evince a peculiar and embarrassing fondness for me. I thought I had reached the limit in hair-breadth escapes some time ago, but a film in which I played quite recently made my previous thrills seem tame, and nearly finished me altogether, as far as this world is concerned.

I have been working for the Kalem Company for quite a while, and what the producer of that company says is law, as far as I am concerned. But when I heard that the historic story of "Uncle Tom's Cabin" was to be filmed, and that I was cast for luckless Eliza, I started thinking seriously. Having read the book again, I interviewed the producer.

"Why, *that's* all right!" he assured me. "We're going to wait for three feet of snow, and then the Jamestown River will be a mass of floating ice. Then we can film your (Eliza's) escape over the snow for miles, and her trip across the ice-filled river with a child in her arms. It'll be *the* picture of your life!"

It was—but not quite in the way he meant.

When they said "Are you game?" I gave them an affirmative answer—what was the good of shirking it? And excitement began, from my point of view, from the very moment the camera-man yelled "Go!"

One freezing day, wrapped in several fur coats over my thin cotton frock—Eliza was very inconsiderate in her choice of clothes!—I left the Kalem studio, in Florida, and proceeded to the scene of Eliza's flight.

The snow was there before me—four feet of it—hard and glistening, and deadly cold. My shoes were fairly thick, but my dress was the thinnest thing in clothes that I have ever encountered. With blue noses and chattering teeth, the producer and operators stood waiting, with their cameras focussed over an undulating expanse of snow-covered ground—miles of it!

"Now, Miss Nilsson," remarked the producer—and I began to dislike him intensely—"you start straight away, with the child in your arms. Make for that tree, away to the right—it's about three hundred yards, I should say. Then wait, and we'll catch you up. I don't think you'll find it too easy going, but, if you do, just stumble a bit, to add to the thrill."

I looked at the snow, and I looked at little George Hollister, the producer's son, who was to make the journey in my arms.

"Oh, I guess I shall stumble all right, without trying!" I informed Mr. Hollister. Then I flung off my coats, seized little Georgie, and started.

Heavens, it was awful! My toes became numb as I staggered along; my arms froze as I clutched the child to my heart.

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I was half across the river, and abreast of the ever-clicking camera, when the accident happened with appalling suddenness. I stepped on to a fresh lump of ice, and it cracked clean in half beneath my weight. (*Page 46, col. 2.*)

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On I went, following, as well as I could, a rough track in the snow. Then, suddenly, my shawl blew up before my eyes; I swayed, caught hold of the child, took a few steps blindly—and plunged into a snowdrift!

Oh, I shall never forget the ghastly feeling of slipping, slipping, slipping into that yielding mass of snow! To my waist I sank; then to my armpits; then—why, then I saw Mr. Hollister running towards me.

Snatching the child's ankles, I thrust him up above the snow. His father caught him, and in a few seconds—years, to me—I was dragged out of the hateful drift, and planted, a shivering, wretched object, on the hard snow once more.

"Couldn't have been better!" I was informed. "Simply splendid! We'll cut the last bit, and leave the rest. Can you go on?"

"As well be hanged for a sheep as for a lamb!" I thought, and, imagining that nothing much worse could possibly happen, I said I was ready to finish the picture.

I was wrong. The worst was still to come.

After Eliza—otherwise myself—had continued her escape over the snow, we arrived at the Jamestown River for the famous ice-floe scene.

I had to cross that rushing torrent by stepping from ice-floe to ice-floe with the child in my arms. An ice-floe, as you may be aware, is a large block of floating ice, and these blocks fill the rivers after the first frost gives. Of course, I had rehearsed this nerve-racking job in a shallower, narrower part of the river, and, apart from the fact that slipping on the wet ice seemed an easy feat, I had got across fairly well.

Now, however, for the actual filming, the river was twice as wide, the current was frightfully strong, and I knew the icy water beneath the floes to be anything from ten to fourteen feet deep. I watched Mr. Hollister fix his camera on a large section of floating ice, so that it commanded both sides of the river. Then I prepared for my desperate journey.

Backing out of sight of the camera, I picked up little Georgie, and started running—stumbling at every step—towards the water. Arrived at the river's edge, I set my teeth, planted one foot on a block of ice, and began to cross that surging current.

Half-a-dozen yards from the bank my troubles began in earnest. At each step the ice-floes tilted to impossible angles, and several times I was nearly precipitated into the dark, freezing water.

On I went, staggering and slipping, with Georgie clinging to me, terrified, poor child, at my erratic progress. I was half across the river, and abreast of the ever-clicking camera, when the accident happened with appalling suddenness.

I stepped on to a fresh lump of ice, and it cracked clean in half beneath my weight!

Flung sideways, I tumbled headlong into the water with my burden. Swimming is one of my pet accomplishments, but, hampered by the child, tired out by my previous efforts, and numbed by the shock of the ice-cold water, I had no resistance left in me.

Dashed against the ice by the strong current, I was dragged down beneath a huge floe. Then I began to fight for my life. Afterwards I was told that, as we disappeared, Mr. Hollister dived to our rescue, smashed his way through the ice—at the cost of crushed and bleeding hands—and swam to the spot where we had vanished.

Subconsciously, I felt him seize me, and begin to drag us both from under the ice into the open water.

Oh, that awful, jagged ice! As I fought my way through it, trying not to impede my rescuer, huge boulders crashed against me, tearing the skin from my hands and ripping my thin cotton dress.

Once in the open water, Mr. Hollister snatched his son from my arms, and got him to the bank, somehow, while I kept myself afloat. All the time—and it seemed desperately long—the current flung me against the ice with a force that nearly stunned me. Finally, I found myself wedged between two floes, and thought: "This is the end! I'm going under now!"

And at that minute Mr. Hollister and one of the actors reached me, only just in time to enable me to tell this story of my narrowest escape from death.

When, surrounded by blankets and hot-water bottles, I began to take an interest in things once more, I asked if the picture was all right. I learnt, to my dismay, that it would have to be taken all over again, because Mr. Hollister's camera had fallen into the water when he came to our rescue, and been ground to pulp between two ice-floes.

Did I repeat Eliza's flight? Of course I did, but in the shallows this time, and without a single mishap.

(Another "Handshake With Death" next month.)

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CAP and BELLS

THE DIFFERENCE.

One day last week I chanced to meet
  Belinda in the town.
"Oh, have you heard," she said, "that I'm
  Engaged to Harry Brown?
We're to be married very soon,
  For he's just had a rise—
He is a dear—you know, he has
  Such beautiful blue eyes!"

That was a week ago—and now
  Belinda writes to me,
"I've broken it off with Harry Brown,
  For I've met Charlie Lee.
I've begun to buy my trousseau—come
  And see my lovely hats;
I'm going to marry Charlie Lee—
  He has blue eyes—*and spats!*"

Elsie Skeet.

LIKELY TO STICK.

DISTRICT VISITOR: "Well, Mrs. Smith, and how's your husband?"

MRS. SMITH: "Oh, he's doing well, thank you, mum. He's got a job at a glue factory now."

DISTRICT VISITOR (absent-mindedly): "Ah, well, I hope he'll stick there."

* * * * *

PAID IN HIS OWN COIN.

BROWN: "Young Smart, of the Grand Hotel, has had the laugh turned against him in his little joke against the Blazes Fire Insurance Company."

ROBINSON: "How?"

BROWN: "He insured five hundred cigars, smoked them, and then sent in a claim on the ground that they were destroyed by fire."

ROBINSON: "And they laughed at him, I suppose?"

BROWN: "No; they had him arrested on a charge of setting fire to his own property."

* * * * *

HONESTY REWARDED.

Once upon a time there was a boy, and he applied for a job.

"We don't want lazy boys here. Are you fond of work?" asked the foreman.

"No, sir," answered the boy, looking the foreman straight in the face.

"Oh, you're not, aren't you? Well, we want a boy that is."

"There ain't any," insisted the boy doggedly.

"Oh, yes, there are. We have had a dozen of that kind here this morning, looking for a situation with us," declared the man.

"How do you know they are not lazy?" persisted the boy.

"Why, they told me so."

"So could I have told you so, but I'm not a liar."

He got the job.

***HE:* "She has everything she needs to make her happy.**

***SHE:* "Yes, but it's the things she doesn't need that a woman needs to make her happy."**

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ADJUT : ANT : ICS.

Well, this is a slow day.

'EADS IT WAS!

The room was full of little girls in pigtails and pink pinnies. They sat in rows at wooden desks as quiet as mice. Over them presided a damsel, sweet-faced, but stern withal.

The lesson concerned coins of the realm, and they had been through the entire range, from farthings to sovereigns.

One little miss, however, was singularly inattentive. Her gaze was fixed upon a playful sparrow on the window sill, and she had no thought for coins.

Suddenly the teacher pounced upon her. Placing half-a-crown on the pupil's desk, she demanded:

"What's that?"

"'Eads!" came the instantaneous reply.

* * * * *

CAUSE FOR DEPARTURE.

She was interviewing the would-be "tweenie."

"And why did you leave your last place?" she asked.

"Well, mum, it was like this. One day the missis ses to me, 'Cymbeline,' she ses, 'get a wet cloth and give the Old Master a wipe over.' I give her notice on the spot!"

* * * * *

INDISPENSABLE.

A city youth, on a visit to a mining district, was being shown over a colliery. Observing the miners descending in the cage, he remarked to a collier standing near:

"I shouldn't like to go down with that rope," indicating the cage rope.

"Please yourself, mister, but I shouldn't like to go down without it," replied the miner.

PAY, PAY, PAY!

A gentleman had been dining with his wife in a restaurant, and when his bill was brought to him, remarked to the waiter:

"Waiter, one item is wrong here. We didn't have three plates of soup. We only had two!"

"Pardon me, sir," replied the knight of the napkin, "you forget the plate that I spilt over the lady's dress."

Ah! Here's someone.

Hope it has eatables.

A ginger-nut?

WANTED—A SHOVEL!

A Scotsman while walking with a friend passed a jeweller's shop where there were many precious stones in the window.

"Would you not like to have your pick?" asked Sandy.

"Not ma pick, but ma shovel," said his friend.

* * *

A DOUBLE REASON.

There are two reasons why some people don't mind their own business. One is that they haven't any mind, the other that they haven't any business.

AN AFFAIR OF THE PRESENT.

Sandy was walking along the road in deep thought, and it was his minister who brought him to earth again with:

"Hullo, Sandy! Thinking of the future, eh?"

"No," replied our hero moodily. "To-morrow's the wife's birthday, and I'm thinking o' the present."

* * * * *

THE PRACTICAL LOVER.

MABEL (sighing): "Charlie is so systematic."

EVA: "How so?"

MABEL: "I asked him in my last letter if he liked my eyes, and now he refers me to his communication of Feb. 24th. Says he treated the subject exhaustively in that communication."

* * * * *

A CASE FOR HANGING.

"Say, fellers," said Bad-eyed Jake to the rest of his mates, "that tenderfoot who stole the hoss claims to be an artist."

"In that case," replied Arizona Pete, as he shifted his pipe to the other side of his mouth, "it would only be doin' the proper thing to appoint a hangin' committee to attend to his case."

No! A cigarette-butt.

SO UNFORTUNATE!

SHE: "I should like you to understand, sir, that my grandfather fell at Waterloo."

HE: "Hard luck! I know those station platforms are awfully slippery sometimes."

I hate these silly jokes.

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JUMPING TO CONCLUSIONS.

A young lady who was examining bicycles said to the salesman: "What's the name of this bicycle?"

"That is the 'Belvedere,'" answered the salesman.

He was rewarded by a stony glare and the icy question: "Can you recommend the 'Belve'?"

* * * * *

ONCE ONLY.

SWISS GUIDE: "This is the famous Matternorn precipice; it is 3000 feet deep."

LADY CLIMBER: "Good gracious me! And do people often fall over th re?"

SWISS GUIDE: "No, madam, never more than once."

* * * * *

ROUNDEL OF YE MORNE.

(From Sir Sluggard hys Boke of Antient Poems.)

When mornynge comes I fayne would lye and yawne
Or woo sweete Sloth that now my Bodye numbs.
But Morpheus he doth fly me like a fawne
When mornynge comes:

For stridentlye hys Lute my naybore strummes
And lo! ye early Birdes upon my Lawne
Syng shrillye as they seeke ye early crumbs.

Nor dare I long lye Debtor to ye dawne—
With Toil's harsh clamour all ye Citye hummes:
Ah, happye wight that hath his Togges in Pawne
When mornynge comes!
B. Franklin Taylor.

* * * * *

HE WANTED BLACKING.

A little lad who shines boots for a living is a regular attendant at a Sunday School. He was recen ly disappointed when, at the annual summer *fête*, his gift was a copy of Browning's poems. The next Sunday, however, the superintendent announced that any child not pleased with his gift could have it exchanged.

Tommy marched boldly up to the front with his.

"What have you got there?"

"Browning."

"And what do you want in exchange?"

"Blacking!"

Quite disarranges my toilet.

Of which I am most particular.

LOSING HIS BALANCE.

JACK: "Yes, I had a little balance in the bank, but I got engaged two months ago, and now——"

TOM: "Ah, love makes the world go round."

JACK: "Yes; but I didn't think it would go round so fast as to make me lose my balance."

THE ROYAL MAGAZINE.

NOT LIKELY.

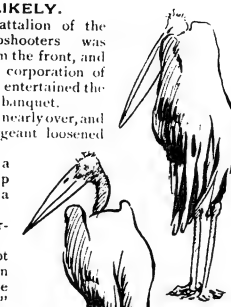
The 15th Battalion of the ——— Sharpshooters was home again from the front, and the mayor and corporation of the county town entertained the brave boys to a banquet.

The meal was nearly over, and a corpulent sergeant loosened his belt.

Presently a waiter sidled up to him with a plate of fruit.

"Dessert, sergeant?"

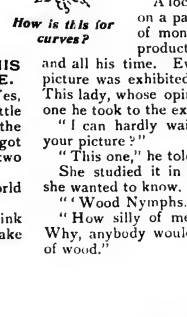
"Desert? Not me, while I can get a feed like this for nothing."



But I'm sleepy.

Well, excuse my back.

And a graceful bow.



How is this for curves?

A PAINFUL EXTRACT.

DENTIST: "Writely, the novelist, was in this morning and had a tooth drawn."

FRIEND: "An extract from a popular author, as it were."

* * *

STILL URGENT.

MISTRESS: "Cook tells me, Mary, that you wish to go out with a friend to-night. Is it urgent?"

MARY: "Oh, no, ma'am, 'tisn't 'er gent—it's my gent."

* * * *

ABSOLUTELY WOODEN.

A local painter worked three months on a painting. He spent a good deal of money on models, but the finished product justified all his expenditure and all his time. Everyone told him so when the picture was exhibited. Everyone but one person. This lady, whose opinion he valued most, was the one he took to the exhibition with him.

"I can hardly wait," she bubbled. "Which is your picture?"

"This one," he told her—and waited.

She studied it in detail. "What is it called?" she wanted to know.

"'Wood Nymphs.'"

"How silly of me to ask! They're so natural. Why, anybody would think they were really made of wood."

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MUCH WORSE.

"My dear," exclaimed Mr. Feedwell as he surveyed his dinner plate with dismay, "we must get rid of that wretched cook of ours. Did you ever see a worse-looking chop than the one I've just put on my plate?"

"Yes, dear," replied his wife, "the one you've just put on mine."

* * *

THE BETTER PART.

SHE (reading a contribution of her lover's in a periodical): "How lovely to be an author! It must be nice to write something worth reading twice!"

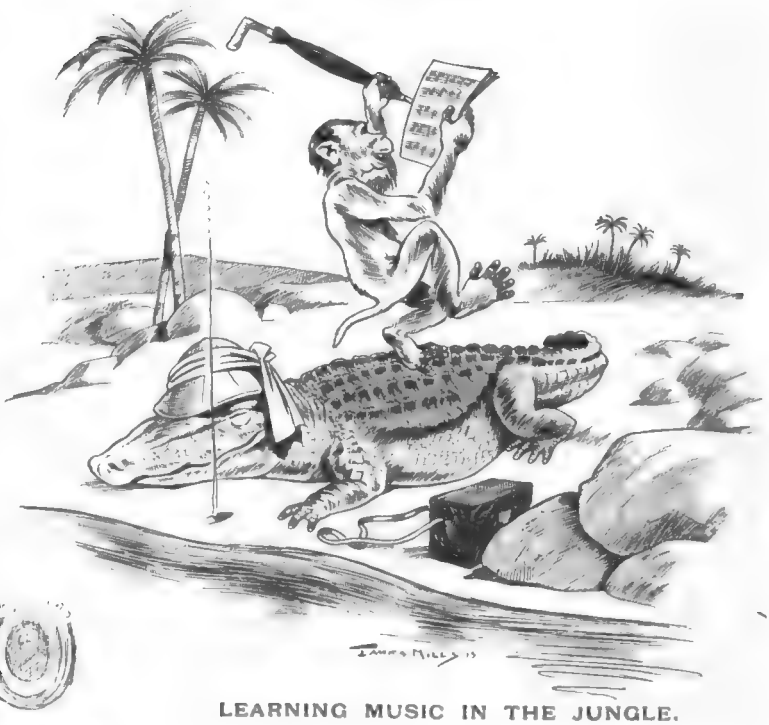
HE (who has had some bitter waste-paper-basket experiences): "It is more satisfactory, dear, to write something worth printing once!"

* *

CONSIDERATE!

MRS. ALLWELL: "Here's the doctor's bill, dear. It smells of ether."

MR. ALLWELL: "Doubtless he thought I'd need an anæsthetic when I received it."



LEARNING MUSIC IN THE JUNGLE.
Practising the Scales.

PARENT: "My father always punished me when I did wrong."
THE TERROR: "Surely you're not going to compare your cruel parent with my dear dad?"

A KNOTTY PROBLEM.

SHE (delightedly): "Papa says if we want to get married, he'll pay half the expenses of furnishing a house for us."

HE (despondently): "But who'll pay the other half?"

* * * *

TEA OR COFFEE?

A traveller went into a refreshment-room at a railway station notorious for its bad catering.

"Will you have tea or coffee, sir?" asked the waiter.

"Don't tell me which it is," replied the traveller, "just bring it to me and let me guess!"

* * * *

FISH AND CHIPS.

The teacher was endeavouring to illustrate to her pupils the association of different species of life with common substances.

"For instance," she explained, "you will always find plants where there is soil, birds where there are trees, and so on. Now, can anyone tell me what we associate with fish?"

Suddenly, with the velocity of an aeroplane, a hand shot up from the back row. It was the property of Tommy Jones. "Please, miss, I know," piped that young hopeful.

"Well?" said the teacher expectantly.

"Chips," was the unexpected reply.

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SURE TO RETURN.

A customer walked into a boot shop recently and asked for a pair of boots. The assistant, a youth of fourteen, showed him a suitable pair, the price being 16s. 6d. The customer stated that he only had 13s. 6d. with him, and inquired if he could pay that and bring the 3s. next day. He was told that he could do so.

After the customer, who was a stranger, had left the premises, the proprietor severely reprimanded the assistant for allowing the man to take the boots, saying he would probably never see him again.

"Ay, but I shall," replied the smart youth. "I wrapped up two boots for the left foot, so he's bound to come back."

* *

TAKING HIM DOWN.

"I seem to remember that lady. Who is she?"

"She was my typist last year."

"She's charming! Why did she leave you?"

"She was too conscientious for me. One day I proposed to her, and what do you think she did? She took down all that I said in shorthand and brought it, nicely typewritten, for me to sign."

* *

ONLY THE SEMI-FINAL.

"I understand," said the manager, "that you have had a half-day off to attend your aunt's funeral?"

"Yes, sir," replied the junior clerk.

"And did all go off well at the final ceremony?" asked the kindly employer.

"Oh, it wasn't the final, sir. It was only the semi-final," said the absent-minded youth.

* * * * *

NOT STONE BLIND.

BELLA: "Oh! dear, the diamond in my engagement ring has got a flaw in it."

GEORGE: "Take no notice, darling. Love should be blind, you know."

BELLA: "Yes, but one need not be stone blind."

A NATURAL QUESTION.

Jimmie giggled when the teacher read the story of the Roman who swam across the Tiber three times before breakfast.

"You do not doubt a trained swimmer could do that, do you, Jimmie?"

"No, sir," answered Jimmie, "but I wondered why he didn't make it four and get back to the side his clothes were on."

'ARRY (in Paris, coming on victim of building operations): "Ang it, now what's the French for 'Are you 'urt?'"

VALET AND VALISE.

A short time ago a commercial traveller, who is a great wag, caused some amusement in a well-known hotel in Manchester.

On arriving at the hotel he made his way to the office to register. As he glanced down the list of guests he was seen to smile, seize a pen, and sign. His entry followed immediately on that of "Lord Bonton and valet," and read "J. Barbary and valise."

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The Mercenary

His Bounty, and How He Won It.

By Scudamore Jarvis.

I.

The office-boy opened the door of the editor's sanctum just wide enough to admit his head.

"Lady to see you, sir," he announced.

"Good heavens!" snorted the editor; "send her away—how often have I told you I won't see anybody in the morning!"

The boy receded a few inches.

"She said she must see you, sir—she won't go away."

The editor rose with a jerk and the head bobbed out of range.

"She said it was an urgent private matter," came in a shrill treble.

The sub. looked up at his chief and shook his head sadly.

"So young and yet so fair. Shall I withdraw?" he asked, with a sigh.

"No, of course not," said the editor, sharply. "Show her in," he shouted to the voice.

At the same moment the glass door swung back, and the dingy little office appeared all at once to assume a brighter aspect. It seemed as if a stray sunbeam had managed to steal in through the dirt-begrimed north window, bringing with it the scent of violets, and the chief and his assistant both rushed at the only available chair and brought it forward.

"The boy didn't give me your name," stammered the editor, putting his lighted pipe into his pocket.

"Portesham," she said, taking the proffered chair—"Mrs. Portesham."

"Ah!" exclaimed the editor with a sigh, and something suspiciously like a groan came from the sub.'s desk.

"What did you wish to see me about?" asked the editor, as he backed into his chair.

It was not often that the offices of the *Sporting Echo* were graced by the fair sex, and never in all his long experience as sportsman, traveller, and connoisseur, had the editor seen anyone to equal Mrs. Portesham. With her dark brown hair, midnight eyes, and soft, olive complexion, she was—as he aptly put it—"the last word in feminine loveliness," and his brusque manner had become almost servile in his effort to please.

"I came to see you because I've heard that you make boxing a special feature of your paper. Is that so?" she began in a rich contralto voice.

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The editor was trying to fix her age, and having concluded that it was not less than twenty-four or more than twenty-seven, he replied that her information was correct.

"Then you are in touch with most of the prize-fighters in England?" she continued.

"Yes—but let's call them boxers, shall we?" he replied. "Prize-fighting is illegal."

"I'm sorry," she said, with a slight access of colour. "I'm afraid I don't know much about it. What I want to know is whether you can put me into communication with a gentleman boxer."

"Do you mean an amateur?" asked the editor, "because if so there are any amount. The Army and Navy and the 'Varsities——"

"Oh, no, I mean a professional—but he must be a gentleman."

"Ah!" The editor pursed his lips. "Now, what do you mean exactly by the word 'gentleman'? Despite the opprobrium that still clings to the ring, quite a large number of the pugilists of to-day are gentlemen—that is to say, gentlemen by instinct and thought, but—well, you won't find their names in Burke. If you require a man with the Harrow accent and the Oxford manner, I'm afraid I can't help you."

"That, unfortunately, is the sort of man I do want," she said, after a pause. "Someone of the same class as ourselves, a man who could go to a dance or a dinner party, and be easy in his manner. He must also be a good fighter."

The editor stroked his head and looked appealingly at his sub.

"What weight would you require him to be?" he asked, with a view to gaining time.

"I beg your pardon?" murmured Mrs. Portesham, in a mystified voice.

"I mean do you want a heavy-weight—a big man—or a fly-weight, a little chap about as big as our office-boy?"

"Oh, a big man—the bigger the better," she said emphatically.

"What about Dick Venables," asked the sub. in a whisper.

"Jove!—the very man. He was here a moment ago."

The editor pressed the bell on his desk.

"Is Mr. Venables still in the office?" he asked, as the boy appeared at the door. "Tell him to wait, as we may want him."

He turned to Mrs. Portesham.

"Now I think I've got the very man for you. Of course I've no idea what you want him to do, but he certainly answers all your requirements. He's a gentleman, educated at Winchester and Oxford, won the Public School and 'Varsity heavy-weights, and is broke to the world. He's doing a little journalistic work for us, poor chap, and I believe if things don't improve, he will take to the ring professionally. I've strongly advised him to do so, as he's a born fighter, but a rotten journalist. He might make a name in the ring, but he'll never set the Thames alight in the newspaper world."

"I'm most awfully obliged to you," said Mrs. Portesham, rising from her chair. "He seems to be just the man I require. Could I—would you introduce him to me?"

"Certainly."

He touched the bell again.

"Tell Mr. Venables we would like to see him here."

Mrs. Portesham gave a sigh of relief as Dick entered the room, for his appearance and manner at once proclaimed him what he was, even if the clothes he wore were not in the first blush of youth. In addition he was big and muscular.

"We have another room if you would like to see Mr. Venables privately," said the editor, marvelling at his own urbanity.

"Thank you very much. I shall be pleased to accept your offer, as the matter is a private one."

The sub. hurried to the inner door and held it open, and Mrs. Portesham entered, followed by Venables, who shot an interrogative glance at his employer.

"I hear," she began, "that you are a good boxer?"

"Yes, I think I'm fairly good," replied Dick modestly.

"Are you as good as a man called Joe Donovan?"

"The American middle-weight?"

She nodded.

Dick whistled. "I can hardly say," he said at length. "You see, I've only boxed with amateurs, but I'm a heavy-weight and Donovan's a middle. Yes—I fancy I might be as good."

He paused, wondering what this very charming lady required of him. Whatever it was, he felt that he would find no difficulty in gratifying her wishes.

Mrs. Portesham began to unbutton one of her gloves. Dick noticed that her fingers trembled slightly, and that a slight blush had deepened the pink in her cheeks.

"I want to ask you if you will do something rather extraordinary," she began, "and I don't know if you will agree to it."

Dick murmured that he was willing to undertake anything.

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"I want you to pretend to be my *fiancé* for a few weeks," she said, and her cheeks flamed suddenly. "Perhaps I ought to have told you first that I am a widow, and therefore it is not so preposterous a suggestion as you may have thought."

"Ah!" breathed Dick. Then, "That would be quite easy," he added.

"I don't think so," she replied decisively. "I—oh, I'd better tell you everything, so that you will grasp what is required of you, but, of course, you understand that it is private. In the first place, I am an American, and my real name is Barluke—my late husband was Jeremy Barluke

She paused, but the name apparently conveyed nothing to Dick, for he made no sign.

"I see you have not heard of him, but if you had, it would not be anything to his credit. He committed suicide two years ago to escape prosecution for swindling a lot of poor farmers in California in a most heartless manner. My position as his widow was unbearable, so I came to England under my maiden name, hoping that no one would hear the truth—not that I have anything to be ashamed of, for I've given two-thirds of my private fortune to the receiver of my late husband's company.

"People over here accepted me, and I was very happy till a man I had known before my marriage arrived at Poolmouth, where I am now living. He had followed me over from America, and is now practically blackmailing me. I may mention that I am still a rich woman, and the man is trying to force me to marry him by threatening to disclose to the people in the district my real name and the unsavoury details of my husband's career and death."

"I see," said Dick, "and you want me to pose as your future husband in order to get rid of the blackguard?"

"That was my idea," she replied.

"But don't you think he would get furious at your engagement and let the cat out of the bag at once?"

"That I think quite possible, but as he will certainly do so in the ordinary course, I can't be very much worse off, anyway. What I really require is that the man Myers should have a thorough thrashing, and that's why I have come to you. Revenge is a horrid, unwomanly feeling, but if you knew what I have suffered in America, you would realise how I feel when I am being bullied and coerced by a blackmailer."

"Quite right," murmured Dick sympathetically. "I have never felt the slightest mercy towards blackmailers."

"Of course I could, no doubt, have found an ordinary prize-fighter to thrash him," she continued, "but it will hurt him so much more if it comes from a man who, as far as he knows, is my future husband. Besides, you may be able to frighten him to such an extent that he will be afraid to carry out his threat of disclosure, although I believe he has a reputation as a boxing man himself.

"I mentioned the man Donovan to you because Myers is supposed to have beaten him once in a fight, and I want you to understand the sort of man you have to meet. Now, having heard full details, Mr. Venables, are you prepared to help me? I don't know what one should pay for this sort of thing, but if you think £500 sufficient, I——"

Dick hastened to assure her that it was more than sufficient. It was on the tip of his tongue to tell her that he would be pleased to help her without any remuneration, but he caught sight of a gaping crack in one of his boots which the frayed edge of his trousers failed to hide, and realised that he was not in a position to refuse any sum of money.

Mrs. Portesham rose and held out a hand with a friendly smile.

"Then it's all arranged. Will you come down to Poolmouth to-morrow and stay at the Royal Hotel, and we'll settle further details there? Oh, by the way," she added, suddenly becoming aware of his shabbiness, "perhaps it would be better if I handed you half the sum now."

She sat down at a desk and wrote out a cheque which she held out to him.

For a moment Dick experienced a feeling of shame that he should accept money for services that should be given gratuitously, but an empty pocket knows no conscience, and he took the cheque.

"I hope that I may earn it to your satisfaction," he said, flushing. "I should have been pleased to help you without monetary reward, but"—he paused, shrugging his shoulders expressively.

"Of course I shouldn't dream of allowing you to do this for nothing," she replied, opening the door. "To-morrow at Poolmouth, then."

"Well, I'm hanged!" said Dick, as he pulled out the cheque and looked at it blankly. "What a glorious woman! I feel half sorry for Myers. I can almost understand a fellow blackmailing her into marriage

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if he couldn't win her any other way."

He looked into the editor's office. "I say," he asked, "have you ever heard of an American of the name of Myers?"

"Yes," said the editor, "there's a prominent amateur heavy-weight called Jim Myers. Is that the fellow you mean?"

"Probably," replied Dick.

"Going to fight him?"

"I don't know. My mouth's sealed, but I'm awfully obliged to you for putting me on to this job. Things have taken a distinct turn for the better, and I must hurry now and get my 'glad rags' out of pawn."

II.

The day after his interview he arrived at Poolmouth, and found a note from Mrs. Portesham at the hotel, asking him to dine that night at her house. There was a postscript to the effect that her Christian name was Moira, and that, for the sake of appearances, he had better address her as such while other people were present.

"The plot thickens," mused Dick, as he changed. "The job of playing prospective husband to a most attractive and wealthy widow is distinctly pleasing, but I wonder if the rest of the programme will be as easy. I take it the general idea is that I should administer a thrashing to a hard case of the name of Myers, who will more than likely thrash me. But how are we to start? If he is all for knocking me over the head directly we meet, it will be simple enough, but otherwise I suppose I shall have to force a quarrel on him, which is a task I don't at all relish."

It was with a quickening of his heart that Dick walked into Mrs. Portesham's drawing-room that evening, and he paused for a moment on the mat to pull himself together. His hostess came towards him with a pleased smile and took his hand.

"I'm glad you are not as late as usual, Dick," she said playfully. "Now, let me introduce you to Mrs. Bouverie."

Dick bowed to a middle-aged lady, who was evidently present for the sake of propriety, and then turned to find himself looking into a pair of particularly evil eyes, set in a brutal, cunning face.

"Mr. Myers—my *fiancé*, Mr. Venables," said Mrs. Portesham, with a slight catch in her voice.

Dick met the savage stare with an equally truculent one, and, bowing slightly, proceeded to take stock of his future antagonist. He saw a man of the same height as himself, built on powerful lines, with the small, bullet head and massive jaw of the born pugilist. His dress suit, though evidently cut by a good tailor, hung badly on his bulky frame and huge shoulders, and his shirt-front bulged untidily by reason of the mighty chest behind it. But it was the evil, bestial face that arrested Dick, and he felt that he would have little compunction in thrashing the man if it lay in his power, though, as he surveyed the other's frame, he felt rather doubtful of the issue if they should meet.

Dinner was announced, breaking an awkward silence.

"Come," said Mrs. Portesham. "Will you take in Mrs. Bouverie, Mr. Myers? Dick, for your sins you'll have to put up with me."

"What a thing it is to have committed sins," replied Dick lightly, offering his arm.

"Committed a good many in your time, I suppose," grunted Myers offensively.

"Heaps," confessed Dick gaily, "but I flatter myself that I don't proclaim the fact in my face."

As even Myers himself must have been aware of the exceedingly unpleasant cast of his features, the shot went well home, and Dick congratulated himself on having set a match to the conflagration.

"Have you been fishing lately, Dick?" asked Moira, as they sat down to the table.

"A little," lied Dick, who had not cast a fly for years.

"Been pretty successful too!" sneered Myers, with a glance in his hostess' direction.

"Most," agreed Dick pleasantly.

"Have you noticed, though," went on Myers, "that it's always the finest fish that never come to the landing-net?"

"There are exceptions," replied Dick.

"But it doesn't do to leave anything to chance." put in Moira.

By this time Mrs. Bouverie, who had come to the conclusion that she was being left out of the conversation, had collected her thoughts, and now chimed in with a long and verbose account of a salmon that a cousin of hers played for three hours on a Scotch river, and the anecdote lasted almost till the end of dinner. Myers sat in gloomy silence, taking no part in the discussion, but drinking heavily, and he did not look up from his plate until Moira, giving the signal, followed Mrs. Bouverie from the room, leaving the men together.

For a moment there was a tense silence. Then Myers rose and stood with his back to the fire surveying Dick with a sullen stare.

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"Think you're going to marry her, eh?" he asked suddenly, hitching one shoulder in the direction of the drawing-room.

"Oh, yes," said Dick, pleasantly; "very soon, I hope."

"You *hope*, eh?" sneered Myers. "Well, hope's as far as you'll get."

'Really?" replied Dick, in the most exasperating manner he could command. "You seem to be in a prophetic mood. What is there to prevent my marrying Mrs. Portesham?"

Myers threw his cigarette into the fire and stepped towards Dick in a menacing manner.

"You've me to reckon with, my young friend," he declared, tapping his chest. "In the first place her name ain't Portesham at all—she's the widow of Barluke, the forger and suicide."

"Yes," said Dick, calmly. "I knew that all along, and it makes no difference to me."

Myers seemed taken aback for a moment, as he had not expected Moira to forestall him.

"Oh," he said blankly, "so she told you that, did she?"

"Yes—it's quite ancient history," replied Dick languidly. "Have you anything more to say? I must admit I find your conversation rather boring."

The insolent remark stung Myers to fury, and he shoved his livid face against Dick's.

"Yes, I've a lot more to say," he growled, "and you ain't going to leave this room till I've said it. You ain't going to marry Mrs. Barluke, and the sooner you learn that the better."

"Who's to prevent it?"

"Jim Myers. Look here, son, I've half killed better men than you before breakfast, and I'm not going to let a white-faced Britisher stand between me and the woman I want. Now do you understand?"

"Perfectly. You want to fight. Well, I'm quite ready. Where shall we go?"

Myers had evidently expected to intimidate Dick by his truculent manner, backed up by his powerful physique, and the Englishman's readiness to fight nonplussed him for a moment. Like all bullies and braggarts, he preferred to get his own way by threats and menaces, and there was something in Dick's cool confidence that he found rather ominous. He still clung to his bluffing tactics, however, and played his last card by pulling off his coat in a menacing manner.

"Come on!" he cried. "Let's settle who's better man right here."

"You surely won't forget yourself so far as to fight in a lady's house?" exclaimed Dick "Let's go outside, and—" He broke off suddenly as the door opened and Moira entered.

"What's the matter?" she asked in well-feigned alarm.

"This dude friend of yours and I are going to settle a little difference," said Myers insolently.

"But not here," began Moira.

"Wal, you ain't studied my feelings much, Moira, and I don't see why I should study yours. Why did you ask me to dine here to-night? You've never invited me inside your house before. You got me here to show me the man you're going to marry so as to rile me, and now I'm going to rile you. By the time I've finished with your young man he won't be much good to anyone."

"You seem to be full of talk," said Dick, quietly. "Haven't you a room somewhere at the back of the house, Moira, where we could settle this affair?"

She looked towards Dick with a frightened expression, but his cool demeanour gave her renewed confidence.

"There is a lawn," she said breathlessly. "It's on beyond the flower garden."

"Good!" cried Dick. "There's a full moon, so it will be as light as day. Come along, Mr. Myers, we may as well get this over as soon as possible," and, shooting a reassuring glance in Moira's direction, he walked out into the hall.

The lawn at the end of the garden was admirably suited to a fistic encounter, for the turf was soft and springy, and the light from the moon overhead equal to any arc lamp. Dick walked to the centre and peeled off his dress coat, waistcoat, and shirt, fastening his trousers round his waist with a handkerchief. He then became aware of a third figure, which lurked discreetly under a tree, but which came into the light on seeing that it was discovered.

"The butler, sir," the newcomer introduced himself politely. "Seeing as how you two gentlemen were going to settle a little difference, I took the liberty of coming down to hold the watch. You can rely on my discretion, sir; I was in Mrs. Portesham's family for twenty years."

"Excellent!" replied Dick. "You have a watch, I see. What shall it be, Mr. Myers—two-minute rounds and a minute interval, and fight to the finish?"

"As you please," said Myers, whose bombastic manner had deserted him. The eagerness of the Englishman for the fray left the

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Myers threw his cigarette into the fire and stepped towards Dick in a menacing manner. "You've me to reckon with, my young friend," he declared, tapping his chest.

other strangely cold, and he almost regretted that he had been so precipitate.

"Right," said Dick. "I'm ready."

He walked out into the full light of the moon and stood awaiting Myers' attack. The American, who had stripped to the waist, came forward, the pale light showing up his huge, muscular form and immense arms. By the side of the more slenderly built Britisher, he looked like a giant of old, but the puffy face spoke of high living and dissipation, and the legs that supported his frame seemed weak in comparison with the rest of his body.

He crouched in American style, with his head sunk in his arms, which he wreathed in front of his face, and, stepping lightly on his toes, he began to slide towards Dick like a tiger stalking his prey. Dick watched him carefully, his long left arm held out before him, his right across his chest. He knew something of the American style and guessed that Myers' tactics would take the form of a rush to close quarters, followed by heavy short-arm blows at the head and body.

For a quarter-of-a-minute the two men circled round each other warily, for this was a fight with naked fists when one blow might mean victory, and no point was to be gained by light taps and spectacular play. Suddenly the American's muscles quivered and his right leg stiffened up, but Dick was on his guard and had quickly slipped backwards. It was but a feint, however, and next moment Myers had rushed.

Smack! Dick's fist, with the full weight of his body behind it, had shot out like a piston rod and landed full on the American's face, but it did not check his onslaught. Next moment he was in at close quarters and lashing out furiously at Dick's ribs, his breath coming in savage grunts as he put every ounce of strength into the blows.

Dick gasped painfully and tried to jump back, but Myers had fought with most of the clever Yankee pugilists of the day and knew how to retain an advantage when he had gained it. With his head resting securely on Dick's chest, he hammered away relentlessly at the other's ribs, and the Englishman felt that his strength was fast failing him under the hail of blows.

He strove vainly to throw the American off, and hammered fiercely at his defenceless back, but his fist met a solid mass of muscle that he was powerless to hurt. Then Myers, feeling that he had victory within his grasp, stood back an inch or so to get more swing into his punches, and this gave Dick an opportunity he was not slow to grasp.

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His right arm bent suddenly and then shot across his chest, catching the American full on the point of the jaw. A trained man, skilled in the use of his fists, can put as much force into a punch delivered at half distance as he can when he has room to extend his arm to its full length, and Dick had learnt from experience how to hit at close quarters.

Myers spun round, staggered a few feet, and then subsided with a thud on the grass. He rose unsteadily with much of his confidence departed, and Dick's sudden rush took him off his guard. This time the fight was carried out on English lines, and Dick, keeping a straight left well to the fore, hammered Myers unmercifully.

Dick's sinister hand kept shooting out with the force and precision of a piston rod, and each time Myers' head went back with a jerk. He swung and lashed out with both arms, but lack of training had told its tale, and he was woefully inaccurate, while, try as he might, he could not keep that long, invincible left out of his face.

Occasionally Dick would vary the proceeding, and the left prod would start only to be followed like lightning by a right hook as Myers tried to guard the feint. The American was bleeding freely from the nose and mouth, but he was still full of fight and cunning, for, so far, Dick had been unable to land a telling blow. To do so he would have to risk coming to close quarters, and his plan was to weaken his opponent with straight lefts till he could meet him on his own ground with impunity.

The dew was falling fast, which had the effect of making the grass slippery, and, as Dick stepped back to avoid a wild swing, his foot slithered away from under him, and he stumbled forward to meet a heavy jolt on the chin. With a muttered curse Myers was on him again, but as he started the hail of deadening body blows, the butler, who had been a silent onlooker up till now, called "Time!"

Dick threw himself on the grass, breathing heavily, and rubbed his burning face in the cold dew, while Myers, evidently very much the worse for wear, lay on his back blowing stertorously.

The minute interval went past all too quickly, but Dick was better off than his opponent as they stood up to each other for the second round. His face was practically unmarked, whilst Myers' was almost unrecognisable. His thick lips were swelled to enormous size, and both eyes were nearly closed, while his legs wobbled suspiciously as he advanced towards the Englishman.

"Keep him off a bit longer, sir," whispered the butler in Dick's ear. "He's weakening fast, but don't take any chances with him just yet."

Myers settled into his customary crouch, and circled round warily, waiting for a chance to dash into close quarters.

He hated that unerring left which kept smacking into his face with monotonous regularity, and he knew that the constant prods were slowly but surely sapping his strength, but he was quite unable to avoid or guard them. The days had passed when he could stand up and receive a merciless hammering without feeling the effects of it, and he realised that his only chance lay in getting to close quarters and smashing his opponent out by his superior strength.

He took two hard lefts in the face while waiting for an opening, and then came in with a rush, covering his face with his arms, but the turf had become worn and greasy, and his foot slipped. He half uncovered to regain his balance, and Dick, stepping back, put all his weight into a terrific uppercut. Myers went down in a heap, and lay there, breathing heavily, while the butler chanted the count, but neither Dick nor Myers took any notice. It was a fight to the finish, where no ringside rules were observed, and until one or the other acknowledged himself beaten the struggle would go on.

Myers knew this, and took half-a-minute's rest on the cool grass, while Dick waited, filling his lungs with the cold night air. A sudden exclamation behind caused him to glance over his shoulder, and, to his surprise, he saw that Moira, unable to restrain her curiosity and anxiety, had come out to see how her champion was faring, and it was her gasp of relief on finding that the prostrate man was Myers which Dick had heard.

The wily American, however, had seen her coming across the lawn and had guessed that her arrival would cause Dick to look away for a moment. He had waited, nerving himself for a spring, and as Dick turned his head, he rose from the ground with an agility surprising in a man of his bulk, and tore into his enemy.

Smash! smash!—his heavy fists landed with sickening thuds on Dick's unprotected ribs, and the Englishman staggered back, gasping under the hail of blows. A fearful right swing caught him under the heart, and with a sob he tottered forward, his muscles deadened, his brain numbed with pain. This was the chance Myers had been waiting for, and now that he had his enemy

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Dick, keeping a straight left well to the fore, hammered Myers unmercifully. Dick s sinister hand kept shooting out with the force and precision of a piston rod, and each time Myers' head went back with a jerk.

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at his mercy he stood squarely on his feet and began to smash the life out of him. Half-blind and gasping with pain, Dick feebly tried to parry the hail of blows, and half unconsciously he staggered into a clinch where the American rocked him with savage jolts, jumping off the ground as he struck to get more force into his punches.

Dick knew that he was beaten, and then far away he heard the butler's voice calling. The words came to him as in a dream, and then it occurred to him that the man was shouting "His body, sir—go for his body."

Mechanically Dick struck out with his right, and Myers' face suddenly twisted with pain. Dick jerked his arms furiously, his strength coming back to him with a sudden rush with the return of confidence, for he had found the American's weak spot. Years of easy living had turned his abdominal muscles into fat, and every punch that landed gave him excruciating pain.

He broke ground as a powerful uppercut shook him to the heels, and doubled up with agony. A swift, unerring left jerked his head back, and then, nerving himself for one all-powerful blow, Dick drove hard and true with his right for the jaw. The blow landed with a dull thud, and Myers' hands dropped to his sides and his eyes opened wide. For a fraction of a second he stood swaying to and fro, and then, with a crash, he toppled to the ground.

Panting hard, Dick stood over him, but there was no fight left in the inanimate American—the blow had landed square on the angle of the jaw, jarring every nerve in his body and rendering him unconscious. When he came to his senses, five minutes later, he sat weak and shaken on a garden seat, and tried to gather his scattered thoughts.

"Look here, Myers," said Dick, "we've fought it out and settled who's the better man."

"That's so," grunted the American, who was sufficient of a sportsman to know when he was beaten, and feel respect for his conqueror.

"Now, I want you to clear right out of this place and let Mrs. Portesham alone," continued Dick. "If you'd beaten me I should have done the same. That's a square deal, isn't it?"

Myers regarded him thoughtfully for a moment, and then rose shakily and held out his hand.

"Put it there," he said. "I reckon that's fair enough, but I never calculated you'd beat me. You're some useful with your fists, Mr. Venables, and I reckon the ring missed something pretty good when you fixed up to marry the widow." Taking the overcoat that the butler handed to him, he walked unsteadily towards the garden gate.

Dick washed and dressed, and, going into the house, found Moira waiting for him in the drawing-room. At the sight of his battered face she gave a little scream, and came to him with outstretched hands.

"Oh, I wish I hadn't asked you to do it, Mr. Venables," she cried. "It was a horrid, unwomanly thing to ask of a man, and I shall never forgive myself. Your poor face—will it ever get right again?"

Dick felt it tenderly, and, having satisfied himself that his nose was not broken, expressed a hope that it would be practically normal again within a week.

"What happened to Mr. Myers?" she asked. "When I saw you had beaten him I came away, feeling disgusted with myself."

"He's gone," replied Dick. "After all, there was a grain of decency in the man, and he's left Poolmouth and agreed never to worry you again."

"I suppose now that you've done what I asked of you, you will be wanting to get away?" Moira continued.

Dick murmured that there was no particular hurry, for, to tell the truth, he regretted that his work was ended. Now that it was too late he wished that he had not carried out his task so quickly, for he would have liked to remain at Poolmouth a week or more.

She rose and went to her writing desk.

"Here is the rest of the money," she said, with a blush as she held out the cheque. "But if—if you'd like to stay on as my secretary, I'd be awfully pleased to have you."

"Do you really require one?" asked Dick eagerly, taking a step towards her. "I'd be delighted if—if it's not a charitable offer."

"Of course not. You see, having introduced you here as my future husband, it will be rather awkward to account for your sudden disappearance. We must give people a few weeks' grace before we break it off."

And so Dick stayed, and, whether it was due to the fact that Moira dreaded the gossip which would ensue on the breaking off of the engagement, or whether it was due to other things, the fact remains that Dick never left, and the difficulty of living under a false name has been solved by her taking the surname of Venables—to which she has every right.

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Picture Paragraphs

The Editor will be Pleased to Purchase Photographs of an Interesting or Out-of-the-Way Nature.

All Photographs should be Accompanied by a Short Description.

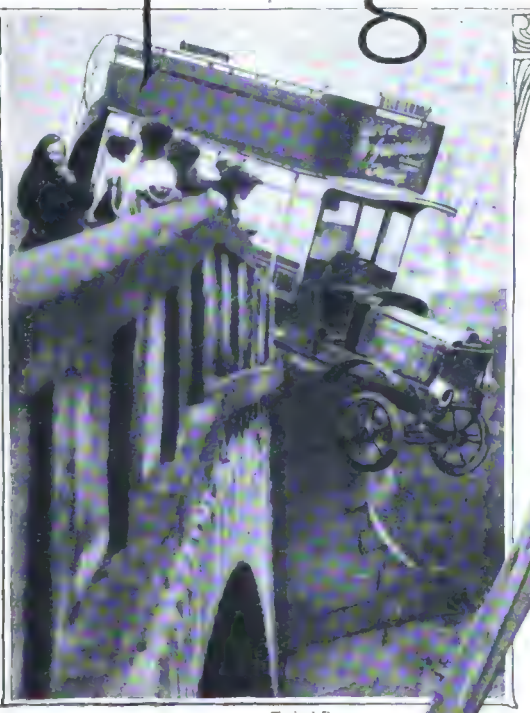

Photo *Topical Press.*
Four passengers at Smalwell, near Newcastle, had a narrow escape when a motor-'bus skidded and stuck on the parapet of Derwent Bridge.

A NARROW SHAVE.

MOTOR-'BUSES are wayward vehicles, and one has become more or less resigned to their pirouetting on the pavement or executing lightning turns in a crowded street. This, however, is not the limit of their achievements.

A motor-'bus at Smalwell, near Newcastle, skidded in avoiding a cart, and nearly leapt over the parapet of Derwent Bridge. Happily for the four passengers, the 'bus stuck, and they were saved from taking an impromptu bath in the river, thirty feet below.

Patrons of motor-'buses will await further acrobatic developments with awe, and may yet have to provide themselves with life-belts and an ambulance outfit before boarding their chosen vehicle.

Photo *Illustrations Bureau.*
An expedition to the Soudan for the purpose of taking big game hunting films includes two operators who will disguise themselves as a giraffe, and so act as decoys.

A HUMAN GIRAFFE.

Two cinematograph operators who are attached to an expedition to the Soudan propose to disguise themselves as ostriches, and as a giraffe, in order to decoy the animals needed for the big game hunting films which it is their object to secure.

It takes two men to make a giraffe, and the disguise is a most effective one, and should deceive even the most suspicious of wild beasts.

The expedition is under the leadership of Mr. Noel Macklin, the well-known sportsman, and consists of five white men, five horses, a pack of foxhounds, and a small pack of terriers.

The hounds are to be used for hunting lions, leopards, and hyenas, but no animal will be killed unless it becomes a menace to human life.

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THE PERFECT WOMAN IN THE MAKING.

At a model open-air school at Bryn Mawr, Philadelphia, are fifteen girls whom the authorities hope to mould into perfect women by blending education and physical training.

The girls practically live in the open air, and in cold weather they wear thick Eskimo suits with hoods and trousers.

The school building is delightfully situated among trees, and it is hoped that one similar building may be built every year until they number seven.

The curriculum includes meals and frolics on the lawn, open-air naps, swimming, skating, fencing, and horseback riding, while dancing is also taught.

The terms, which are inclusive, are £20 for the first year, increasing by instalments to the maximum of £34.

Photos, Sport & General and Topical Press.

Some of the pupils at a model open-air school at Bryn Mawr, Philadelphia. In the top picture they are seen learning to walk musically.

A REMARKABLY SITUATED CHURCH.

The Church of St. Michel-d'Aiguille is situated at Le Puy, a picturesque little town in the Auvergne district of Central France, and certainly occupies a unique position.

It is built on the summit of a mass of rock, which rises some 280 feet above the level of the plain, and is approached by 277 steps. The ardent soul who negotiates these, finds, upon reaching the summit, another very similar rock supporting a Madonna and Child.

This curiously placed church dates from the middle of the tenth century, and dominates the countryside for miles around. The view to be obtained from the summit is well worth the arduous climb, apart from the interest attaching to the church itself.

No visitor to Le Puy should fail to visit it—even in spite of the 277 steps.

Photo C. Uchter Knox.

The Church of St. Michel-d'Aiguille, at Le Puy, in France, which is built on a rock 280 feet above the level of the plain.

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INQUISITIVE SHEEP.

EVEN animals show an interest in motors nowadays, or so it seems from the thorough way in which these two sheep are investigating the mechanism of an unguarded car.

The owner of a big silver mine in Tacna, Chili, having left his motor in the road for a few minutes, returned to find it had been taken possession of by two inquisitive sheep, who were examining it with the air of experts.

Photo *The Tatler.*

Inquisitive sheep examining a car which had been left unguarded on a by-road in Chili.

Photo *B. A. Shields*

An enormous stack of wheat in the course of erection at Rochester, in Victoria, Australia. It contains about 3000 tons, awaiting shipment.

WALLS OF WHEAT.

THE township of Rochester, in Victoria, Australia, has a population of only about two thousand, but it exports more wheat yearly than any other town in the colony.

As much as 150 to 300 tons of wheat is dispatched daily from the railway station, but, in spite of this, so much wheat accumulates that it has to be stacked along the line near the station.

At the end of the carting season the land on either side of the railway is one long line of immense wheat stacks. One stack will sometimes stretch for 100 yards and contain about 3000 tons of wheat.

There it has to stay awaiting shipment until the railway authorities can deal with it, so that the line has all the appearance of being barricaded against a siege.

A REMARKABLE "JU-JU" POST.

AJUMAKASE, a small West African village ten miles from Coomassie, the capital of Ashanti, possesses a remarkable "Ju-Ju" post.

The village consists of about a dozen huts built of mud and with thatched roofs.

The post stands in the middle of the one and only road leading from Coomassie to Kintampo in the north.

On the top are two carved wooden guns commanding the entrance and exit of the village, and carved figures decorate the post itself.

Photo *Capt. E. J. Moclaughin.*

A "Ju-Ju" post in Ajumakase, a West African village; two wooden guns decorate the summit, and there are curious carved figures on the post itself.

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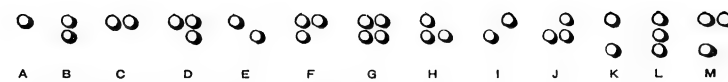

The Braille Alphabet, which is here shown, is formed by using different combinations of six dots. These dots—

How it Feels to be Blind

And a Way by which the Burden of Sightlessness May be Lessened.

By C. Arthur Pearson.

For a longer or shorter period—in the majority of cases, I believe, for many years—you who read this magazine, and I, have been bowing acquaintances, as it were, for though I have had a great many different things to attend to, I have never lost touch with the Royal Magazine, and have always been very proud of its continually growing popularity. But now I want you to allow me for a few minutes to get a little closer to you, to tell you of purely personal things which I would not intrude on you but for the fact that they have a close and intimate bearing upon the really important part of this talk.

Some six years ago my sight began to fail me. I have all my life been an athletic person, devoting most of my leisure to outdoor games of all kinds, and it was uncertainty with regard to the flight of the ball at lawn tennis which first drew my attention to failing vision. I consulted specialists and, after trying in vain the effect of resting my eyes, underwent operations upon them five years ago but to no purpose; for in spite of the best advice obtainable at home and abroad my sight has since then continued to deteriorate steadily, and is now of little service. I can no longer read, nor can I get about without guidance except in quite familiar surroundings.

We have all heard that "a fellow feeling maketh wondrous kind," and the loss of my sight has led me to think a great deal of others in the same plight, but most of whom are not so fortunate as I am. For to have a fair supply of this world's goods does much to lighten such a burden as I have to bear. For example: I can re-visit beautiful and familiar places at home and abroad, and feel that keen joy which lovely scenery affords; for I am so lucky as to have a very retentive visual memory, and can still in my own way see beauties of mountain, lake, and woodland which are, in reality, only a memory. Reading is the one unfailing resource of the blind. We read with our finger tips by the aid of embossed type, an illustration of which appears on this page.

Braille—the invention of a Frenchman, Louis Braille—is the best system of this embossed writing, and by far the most prevalent in the British Empire. It was introduced into this country by that great blind philanthropist, the late Dr. Armitage, who founded the National Institute for the Blind, of which I have lately become Hon. Treasurer.

The Institute exists mainly for the purpose of making books, magazines, and newspapers in Braille. It is infinitely the largest producer of these in the British Empire, and is the only one which does the work by machinery on a considerable scale. Many Braille books are produced by hand—some by blind workers, some by kindly sighted folk, but their work is, necessarily, very tedious, and the books made thus only begin to supply the demand which exists. In spite of the use of the most ingenious machinery which the

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—are numbered, and each dot must be known by its number, the possible combinations of the six dots giving sixty-three simple signs.

wit of man has been able to devise, the process of making these books is slow, cumbrous, and costly—so much so, indeed, that Braille books cost from four to six times as much as ordinary books, and the tragedy of this is that most blind people are very poor.

The new premises of the Institute at Great Portland Street, London, W., which were recently inaugurated by his Majesty the King, will, when finished and fully equipped, enable this cost to be reduced very materially. But it must always remain far heavier than is the cost of literature prepared for sighted folk. It is to these that we must look for the help which will enable us to offset this great disadvantage.

And now let me ask you to consider for a moment what this reading by the aid of Louis Braille's invention really means to the blind.

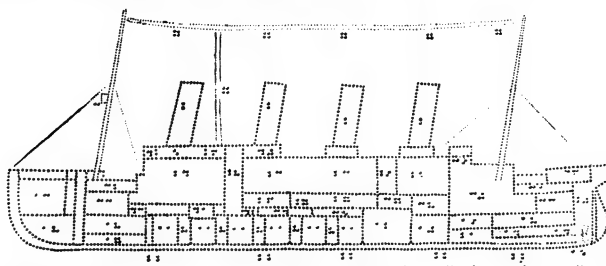
To begin with, it has the immense importance of making them far more independent than they could be otherwise. This means much, even to those who like myself can secure the services of readers at any time, for we like to feel that we are not obliged to be dependent upon kindly help or paid service, but can interest and amuse ourselves. It means that the whole wonderful world which, often, he has never seen, is laid open to the blind man. It means that he is given the key to the Treasure House of fancy, wit, and wisdom. And, far more important, it means that he is able to acquire knowledge of all kinds and thus to equip himself mentally for the battle of life in which many of the blind make so brave a fight. Braille music, too—which we also print—enables blind folk not only to perfect themselves in playing for pleasure, but in many cases to find occupation as musicians. Several of the most renowned organists of the day are blind.

But I do not think I need enlarge upon this. It must be evident to you that lives so trammelled as are those of the Sightless, cannot fail to find an unspeakable joy and resource in the ability to read. It is not too much to say that the Emancipation of the Blind began with the introduction of embossed reading. Their pleasure and their opportunities of making good in the world will increase as this reading matter becomes cheaper and more widely disseminated among them.

And now I wonder whether I have succeeded in the object with which I set out? I wonder if I have led you to feel that you would like to help in this great effort which is being undertaken to place the making of books for the poor Blind Community upon a sounder and more practical basis—to give the Sightless the same opportunities as are possessed by yourself of gaining pleasure and absorbing knowledge through books.

I have almost taken it for granted that this is the case. A picture is inset in these pages. Will you kindly look at it and also at the wording behind it?

I have not asked you whether or no you will buy a book for the blind man. I have assumed that you will, and I trust most sincerely that this assumption is not too bold and that the only real question is: WHICH BOOK WILL YOU BUY FOR THE BLIND MAN?



A picture of the *Titanic* printed in the Braille magazine "Progress" immediately after the great disaster.

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Mr. Thomas Henry portrays the fond father attempting to kiss his firstborn. The infant is up in arms in more ways than one.

THE FIRST KISS.

Initial Attempts, Disastrous and Otherwise, Illustrated by Leading Humorous Artists.

By Sidney Mattingly.

The first kiss, literally interpreted, is by no means a romantic affair. We are all of us kissed many times in infancy before we are old enough to protect ourselves against the osculatory assaults of aunts, second cousins, and other undesirable relations. But their kisses do not, of course, really count; they are kisses in name only. The kisses we are now to consider are the kisses that are begged, stolen, or, better still, borrowed by the young man when in the spring his fancy turns in the usual and inevitable direction.

One of the chief difficulties in connection with the first kiss is to know whether, after all, it is the first. Edwin, when he has obtained the privilege of kissing Angelina, likes to think that no one has ever kissed her before. This is part of human nature, but another part of it entails the horrid suspicion that Angelina (aged eighteen) has a past, unrevealed to him, and possibly simply crowded with similar ceremonies.

This is very tantalising, particularly so as Angelina, if questioned on the point, will be the last person to set his doubts at rest. All the same there is a method, vouched for by an eminent novelist, by which all young men about to embark on the perilous seas of romance may solve the knotty problem. It is simple; it is cheap; it is effective; and the instructions for employing it are as follows:

Edwin, having decided that the time has come for taking the momentous step—*i.e.*, of kissing Angelina, that being the recognised method of proposing nowadays in the best circles—first makes sure that they are alone and unobserved, then without any beating about the bush kisses her in a sudden and unexpected manner.

Suddenness is the essence of the contract, as the lawyers say. If his kiss is wasted on the desert air, or has a more tangible result in the shape of a mouthful of hair-pins, Edwin may rest content. Angelina is new to the game. If on the other hand, Angelina, undismayed, makes no attempt to dodge, but meets his sudden onslaught lip to lip, as it were, his worst fears are justified, and he may safely assume that Angelina has had previous experience.

It is unlikely, however, that he will succeed

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in eliciting from her the name of the villain who has forestalled him. The first kiss is a matter on which human beings of both sexes are, as a rule, extremely reticent. Perhaps it is just as well. Every husband prefers to think that no one has ever kissed his wife before he came wooing, and every wife prefers to think that she is the first woman her husband ever kissed. That is why wise married couples shun the subject.

A sad case in which this excellent plan was not followed came to my notice recently. I was dining one evening at the hospitable board of Sir Simeon Briggs, the eminent candle-manufacturer, for whom and for whose wife I have had the largest respect since infancy. During dinner the talk drifted in a desultory fashion to the subject of kisses, and Lady Briggs, in one of those sudden silences that are apt to fall at the best regulated dinner tables, was heard confiding to her neighbour that the first kiss she could remember had been bestowed upon her by a red-haired boy named Thompson. Lady Briggs is sixty-five, and weighs, as they would say in America, two hundred pounds.

"Unappreciated." The tragedy of a wasted caress touchingly depicted by Mr. Bert Thomas.

Mr. Reg. F. Smith reveals the dire results attendant on kissing the damsel who powders her face not wisely, but too well.

One might have thought she had arrived at the age when the confession of youthful peccadilloes was a harmless hobby. But I caught sight of Sir Simeon's face as he put down, untasted, the glass of wine he had been in the act of raising to his lips.

"Do I understand you to say, Matilda," he said in a polite but awful voice, "that you allowed Samuel Thompson to kiss you?"

Poor Lady Briggs had turned scarlet.

"Yes, dear," she admitted, "I'm afraid I did. But it is a long time ago."

"So I should suppose—and hope," observed Sir Simeon drily.

Not another word was spoken on the subject then, but I felt in my bones that the episode was not ended. And two days later events proved that my suspicions were only too well-founded.

Of course, it never got into the papers. The affair was hushed up on account of the respectability of the parties concerned, but the fact remains that Sir Simeon Briggs called

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"Suffering in Silence." The agony of the dutiful nephew who submits to the salute of a demonstrative aunt, illustrated by Esmond.

one morning at the Lombard Street office of Messrs. Thompson & Spethwick, bullion brokers, and after being shown into the sanctum of the senior partner, Mr. Samuel Thompson, smote that gentleman violently on the nose so that it bled copiously.

Mr. Thompson replied with a smart left to the body, but Sir Simeon was not to be denied, and, rushing into clinches, got in a couple of damaging half-arm hooks before the break-away. Mr. Thompson, though shaken, got home twice on the face, but then, leaving himself unguarded, Sir Simeon found the point with a straight left and Mr. Thompson went down for the count.

The clerks, who were watching with enjoyment through the glass partition, had counted up to nine when a policeman, very obviously fetched by the office boy, came in and stopped the proceedings.

"Caught in the Act." A warning against giving way to affection in public, by Mr. S. Briault.

The reason that I know so much about the affair is that I was dragged into it by Lady Briggs. She sent for me and tearfully implored me to intercede with her husband. He had not spoken to her since the fatal dinner-party, and she fancied he was consulting his lawyers with a view to a judicial separation. Charged with messages of explanation and contrition, I made my way to Sir Simeon's bedroom, where he had gone into dock, so to speak, until the various swellings and abrasions on his person should have vanished.

He was, I think, genuinely pleased to have someone to talk to. He gave me an account of his encounter with Mr. Thompson with a good deal of relish, but apart from that wished it to be distinctly understood that he was a broken and disillusioned man. He doubted, he said, if he would ever have the heart to manufacture another candle. He finally asked me what course, in my opinion as a man of the world, he ought now to pursue. I had my advice all ready.

"If I were you," I said, "I should write a humble note of apology to Mr. Thompson for behaving like an escaped lunatic, and ask him to dine with you and Lady Briggs to-morrow."

Sir Simeon is not used to plain speaking. He scowled at me as well as he could with one eye. The other was still closed.

"If I thought he'd come, I'd ask him and

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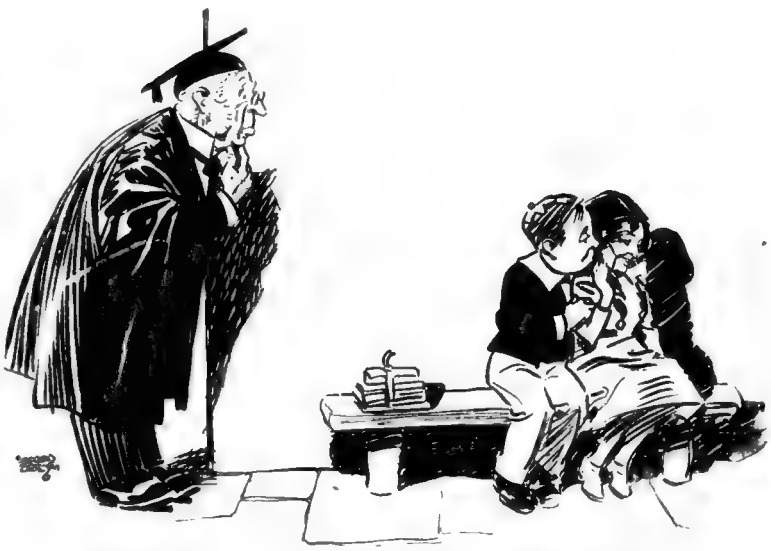
put poison in his soup," he remarked pleasantly. "Anything else?"

"Yes," I went on. "I should then write a still humbler note of apology to Lady Briggs, apologising for behaving like a jealous old fool, mentioning that you had not realised, on account of your natural stupidity, that the episode to which she referred at dinner occurred when she was aged five and Mr. Thompson seven."



"Yielding Under Pressure."—A romance of the schoolroom charmingly portrayed by Mr. Alfred Leete.

Sir Simeon subsided amongst his pillows with a groan.

"You were right, my boy," he said, "you were right about the escaped lunatic and jealous old fool. I'm both of 'em. I'll do what you say, or——." He paused. "You're better at this sort of thing than I am. Bring me over a pen and some paper, and tell me what to say. What an ass I am! Don't be afraid to lay it on thick."

I wasn't.

When, a quarter-of-an-hour later, I descended with two letters in my hand, Lady Briggs met me at the foot of the stairs. The poor lady looked as if she had been weeping without intermission for some days, and could not have weighed an ounce more than one hundred and twenty pounds.

"Did he believe it?" she gasped.

"He did," I replied.

"Thank Heaven," said Lady Briggs. After a pause she added: "I can't think how you thought of it. I shall never be able to thank you enough—never!"

First kisses, like first cigarettes, should, if possible, be given in private, since an audience is apt to destroy the sense of confidence so necessary if the kiss is to be a success. Of course, strict privacy is not always obtainable; there are persons so lost to all sense of decency as to intrude at the very moment when the sacred rite is about to be performed. Wherefore the man who is wise will not linger over preliminaries, but will bestow his kiss before any interruption occurs.

After all, nothing is gained by hesitation, and if the experiment be a pleasant one it may be repeated, in which case time becomes of considerable consequence to both parties.

Moonlight is responsible for many first kisses, and Mr. Geo. Morrow gives us a youthful couple who have fallen under its magic spell.

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The Greatest Gift

A "Human Interest" Story.

By Winifred Carter.

I.

It was over—the hard work, the washing, the ironing, and the bathing of three healthy, mischievous bairns—and now she could give in, and rest her weary, aching limbs and jarred mind.

Margaret Lewis, too tired to seek real comfort, sat huddled up in a stiff-backed chair, which happened to be the first her eyes fell on. She felt afraid to relax, for fear she would never again be able to take up the burden of life, which had become too hard and too exacting. Nurse had left the day before, and the general, wholly incompetent to manage without her mistress, had taken this opportunity to slip away, unable to cope with the work.

And so, alone with her three children and the work of the house on her shoulders, Mrs. Lewis felt that indeed she had done more than mortal woman should that day.

She had taken the children out for their walk in the park, she had cooked and ironed, and had even helped the grumbling char, who had come to do the washing.

A grim smile twisted her strangely youthful lips. She was little more than a child herself, and yet she had to work like this!

But that was not the worst; her husband's new play was to be produced that night, and she couldn't go. That was what hurt her beyond endurance, for she worshipped Adrian, and felt bitterly aggrieved that she would be unable to go. Almost she grudged having had those three fair-haired babies upstairs, rising up in their steps from nine months old to four years old.

Below, the roar and rumble of the traffic seemed to mingle with her chaotic thoughts. It wasn't fair. It wasn't fair that she, his wife, should be absent! Who could have foreseen that both nurse and Sarah would desert her? She knew it was the prospect of the extra work that had sent Sarah away, but that didn't make things easier.

Her little white face seemed far too childish to be a mother's. As the wife of an actor who was slowly making a name, she had to work hard. To-night would show whether Adrian was to be called playwright as well.

The door-bell rang and jangled in the little back kitchen, and, with a groan of weariness, Margaret Lewis got to her feet and dragged herself to the door. A woman in a smart evening gown and a magnificent cloak stood there, and a motor waited outside.

"Can I see Mrs. Lewis?" the woman asked hurriedly.

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"I am Mrs. Lewis," said Margaret simply. "Will you come in?"

"Why aren't you dressed? I've come to fetch you to the theatre."

"Oh!" exclaimed Margaret, and her childish face, which had expressed wonderment at the apparition of such a beautiful woman, became clouded again, "I can't go! The nurse left yesterday, and the other maid slipped off without telling me. The prospect of the work frightened her. I can't go and leave the children."

"But you must. It's to be a great night for your husband. Can't you get anyone in to look after them?"

"No. You see, I wouldn't trust anyone I wasn't sure of, because of baby and Jimmie and Mollie. They might wake."

"How long would it take you to dress?"

"I could dress in half-an-hour," said Margaret excitedly, and her white cheeks displayed a spot of scarlet.

"Then I'll stay," declared the woman. "I'm Norah Foss, and when you didn't turn up, Adrian wondered. I offered to come. Be as quick as you can; the motor is waiting."

Margaret kissed the long, slender hand passionately.

"Adrian has talked of you often. You are quite as beautiful as he said, and you are much dearer. I love you for letting me go. But won't you be disappointed?"

Her face fell again. After all, it was Norah Foss who had found the money to produce this play. She had leased the theatre and had encouraged Adrian. It was surely her right to see the play she believed in to the extent of financing it; but, oh dear! how terribly Margaret wanted to go! She stood biting her lip, and clasping and unclasping her hands in her indecision.

But Norah Foss had made up her mind.

"Go up and dress. I am going to stay."

Margaret ran upstairs, weariness, aching limbs, throbbing temples forgotten in this joy that had been given her. She would hurry, for she was going to see Adrian in his play — her handsome, clever young husband.

She sang softly and her eyes shone as she got into the new evening frock bought for the occasion. It was not anything like Miss Foss' marvellous frock, but it was pretty and simple, and when she had piled her hair up, and had put the thin golden band round it, and had got into the frock of pale blue chiffon, it was a very sweet and desirable woman who gazed shyly into Norah Foss's face, as she ran down into the dining-room. The colour had come into her cheeks and the old sparkle into her eyes.

Norah Foss looked at her with rather hard, criticising eyes. This wife of Adrian's was but a child, with an ingenuous face which could not hide one iota of the emotions filling her heart.

"Be happy," she said. "And I shan't mind waiting here until you come. I see some books here." She nodded towards the bookcase.

"If baby wakes, his milk is in a saucepan on the stove in the kitchen. And the bottle is on the table. I hardly like to ask you, but he won't wake. He's the very best baby in the world."

She looked hesitatingly at the wonderful woman who stood in all the glory of a Worth evening gown. The bizarre cloak was thrown down on the worn little sofa where baby heels had drummed unceasingly for nearly four years.

The cloak was fur-lined, and must have cost pounds and pounds, Margaret thought rather enviously. Her own cloak was an old one. They had thought the extravagance of a new frock all that could be afforded until they knew if the play was a success or not.

Without apparently noticing the old-fashioned wrap hanging over Margaret's arm, Norah picked up the cloak and held it out to Margaret.

"Let me lend you mine," she said quickly. "It's very cold out, and this is fur-lined and so warm. Please!"

There was an air of command about her, and so, delighting in the splendid cloak, Margaret said good-bye and was off.

The curtain had not gone up, and she went to the stage-door. Very seldom lately had she seen Adrian act; before their marriage she had often sat up in the "gods" to watch him, but then he had been one of a crowd. Lately he had climbed, and this was not only his chance because of the play, but because he was playing lead for the first time.

She remembered with a tremulous smile, that on the strength of his first part they had got married. She went into his dressing-room, delighted at the tiny but pretty little apartment. He was the principal character in the play—really "there" at last, her heart told her.

She stood with her back to the door, and fumbled for her handkerchief. It was silly, but she wanted to sob and sob.

Adrian, who had gone out to give a few last directions, opened the dressing-room door. With a bound he had crossed the

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room and had taken the woman, his wife, in his arms.

"Couldn't she come, beloved?" he said in his deep, low voice.

Margaret turned and faced him, and her eyes were dim with her tears of happiness. It was a long time since Adrian had taken her in his arms like this. The tears which would come kept her from seeing his face. The horror and surprise which he could not keep back would have told her too plainly that having seen but the back of the cloak, he had taken it to be, not Margaret, his wife, but Norah Foss, the woman who was helping him to fame and glory.

"She let me come instead," Margaret said breathlessly. "Sarah followed nurse and ran off to-day, without letting me know. I couldn't have come if Miss Foss hadn't stayed instead. She is the very kindest woman and so lovely. I love her, Adrian, for giving me the chance of seeing you."

Adrian Lewis said nothing. If Norah was not going to be there, what would he do! He had meant to play to her! How could he play to his wife, when alas! she no longer held his love?

He wanted Norah near to rouse him and to create that rapture which he needed to inspire him to perform his part successfully. He wanted to act as if on fire, but without Norah near he felt cold.

He looked at Margaret. He had loved her once, in his callow days, but now she was so engrossed in the house and the children, and his work took him so much from her that they had lost touch.

"I was so glad to come," she said softly. "It nearly broke my heart, and I felt like coming and leaving the children, only you know I couldn't. To-night, before Miss Foss came, I wished we hadn't had the children, Adrian."

Adrian looked at her in amazement.

"You wished we hadn't had the children!" he said slowly, and he thought of Mollie, yellow-haired Mollie, and of curly-haired Jim. Baby was too young to interest him much, but the others——. Why, he hadn't realised what they were to him.

And yet she, his wife, who worshipped them, loved him enough to wish, even for a moment, that they had never existed. He looked at her with eyes newly opened.

A sudden resolve shaped itself in his mind. He had meant to act for Norah, but he would act instead for Margaret.

"I'll make good to-night," he muttered, and then she went round and watched with shining eyes the first act.

II.

Norah Foss, left alone in the Lewis' house, felt a passion of anger fill her as the door closed. It was shut so quietly for fear Margaret should wake the children that Norah scarcely realised at first that she had cut herself off from going to Adrian's first night.

What had she done it for? She wanted more than anything in life to see Adrian act to-night. For the play itself and the fact that she was paying for the production, she cared nothing; it was because she loved Adrian Lewis. And yet, touched by the white face and pathetic eyes of Adrian's wife, she had let slip her great happiness.

What a foolish, impulsive thing she had done, she thought angrily, to let the very woman she was daily wronging go in her place. She smiled wryly to herself. She loved Adrian and he loved her with a deep, overpowering love that cared for nothing, neither the talk of the world nor the heart-break of a wife. She meant to have Adrian for hers and hers alone.

They intended to ruin this little home because of their great love, and what did it matter whom they hurt or wounded on the way?

She flung herself furiously into a chair. She was rich, but it was not her money Adrian loved, it was herself. She was beautiful, and had a strange hold over him.

How she loved him! Fire ran in her veins, and she hated Margaret Lewis and herself because she had been impelled to give up her night, that night she had longed for and dreamt of, to the little white-faced doll of a woman—his wife.

A little shoe, rubbed at the toe, drew her attention and she picked it up curiously. Nothing connected with children had ever come her way. She looked at it, a little brown leather thing, with the impress of a fat little hard-working foot in it. And then she dropped it sharply as a cry came from upstairs. It was the baby!

What on earth was she to do? She had listened, carelessly enough, as Margaret told her about the bottle, but she realised now what a position she was in. She tiptoed upstairs, her heart beating quickly. It was an appalling situation to face. She who knew nothing of children was alone with three!

The tiny flame from the night-light showed her where the children slept. The baby was in a cot at the side of a big bed, and in a smaller room leading out of the big bed-room, the other two slept.

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She stepped quickly to the baby. He had stopped crying for a moment and had got his thumb in his mouth and was busy sucking it. Perhaps he would go to sleep again. But the crying had awakened Jimmy, and a muffled sound came from the other room.

"Wansh drink of water! Wansh drink of water! Zimmy firsty!"

She found the water and went into the other room.

Two little beds, side by side, held two of the sweetest faces she had ever seen. Mollie, the four-year-old eldest, was asleep, one dimpled cheek on a dimpled fist. Jimmy was sitting up in bed, a curly-haired boy, with bright wide-opened eyes that were so amazingly like Adrian's. He wasn't a bit frightened of her as she expected he would be, and she gave him the water rather timidly. It was strange that this fine, magnificently attired woman felt uneasy in the presence of Adrian's children.

Suddenly he opened his eyes and saw her. Norah had always heard that a baby cried on seeing a strange face, but this baby didn't.

He drank it, watching her curiously.

"Sank 'oo, new nurth!" he said, and put his sleepy head against the glitter of her dress for a moment.

"Pwitty!" he lisped, and then she tucked him up and crept back to the baby, something in her bosom stirring faintly, but surely. A vague longing for the riches this woman, who was her enemy, possessed, filled her and turned her mind into a seething state of revolt.

She, Nora Foss, had money and looks, and she had won from his wife Adrian's worship, but she could never win these babes from her. Margaret always had the whip hand in Jimmy, and Mollie, and baby.

She bent over the baby, who was quiet now, but something different in the proceedings seemed to make itself felt, for suddenly he opened his eyes and saw her.

Norah had always heard that a baby cried on seeing a strange face, but this baby didn't. He was a happy, serene little mortal and not given to tears.

He lay there gurgling and spluttering.

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Norah watched him fascinated. Jimmy might be adorable and Mollie a perfect picture, but there was something about the baby that made her feel weak within herself. It made tears fall from her eyes and drop to the little worn quilt.

Then, with one hard kick, the bed clothes were sent off, a fat dimpled leg was thrust out, and the baby commenced a thrilling account in his own language, of all that had happened during the day. That fat foot squirmed and kicked; it seemed possessed with virile life. How scalding her tears were! They seemed to burn her brain.

But the baby's voice became more insistent. What was she to do? If she took him up he might cry, and it might be hours before Margaret came home. Then she thought of the bottle! It would be a good plan to get it ready in case the baby needed it. She couldn't nurse him and prepare the bottle, too.

She ran downstairs and into the kitchen. A feeling of wonder filled her when she realised that Margaret looked after the three children, and had evidently done the housework, too, that day.

A string of ironing stretched across the kitchen, and a horse full of clothes—dear diminutive little garments with holes and tears—showed her what Margaret's life was.

But, then, hadn't Margaret the children? Didn't that compensate for everything? Wasn't it the greatest gift life could give a woman?

She found the milk and heated it, then poured it into the bottle. By this time the baby's voice had become a whimper; still he did not cry, though she guessed he would soon, if the bottle was not forthcoming.

She put the bottle in front of the dining-room fire and went upstairs to get the baby.

She had never held a child in her life. Babies had had no interest for her, and now she trembled as with unaccustomed hands she lifted Adrian's baby.

She stood for a moment with the little downy head against her breast, and a feeling of ecstasy thrilled her so that she felt sick with the marvel of it.

What were her money worth, her looks, the reputation for smartness and witty conversation which she had cherished? Why, she hadn't anything, but Margaret Lewis had it all, full and overflowing.

She went downstairs and fed the baby. She had endured agonies of doubt over the proper heat of the milk, but the way the baby settled to it showed that he had no fault to find with it.

When he had had his bottle, instead of going to sleep as he should have done, he commenced a conversation with her. He cooed and thrust with his tiny fists up into her face. Again and again she tingled—it was Adrian's child.

And then suddenly, as the baby head fell back on her arm and the little body grew still and the child slept, she knew what it was she was calmly contemplating. She was going to wreck this home.

She was intending to steal away the man, the father, and the children would be fatherless. They would be almost a byword in after life, for would not their father have run off with a woman who was not his wife?

She had little pity for Margaret. Margaret was a woman and had had her time of happiness once; besides, she had comforters in these three babies. But what about this little boy afterwards? He would learn to hate the name of his father.

With Adrian's child in her arms she confessed to her own soul that she had seen Adrian and had fallen in love, had led him on, and had encouraged his feelings for her until she had created in him an answering passion. She was to blame! If the world said this time: "It is the woman's fault!" it would, for once, be right.

But could she do it? Could she take away the father from his babe? Adrian and she loved, but what did that matter? Somehow, though she had thought love, whatever the circumstances, the one thing to be taken into account, she knew now that love which would rob a home of its father, a wife of her husband, was a degrading, and not an uplifting thing! That sort of love was not love and should be crushed as one would crush a snake which reared its head.

She put on some coal, trying not to disturb the baby. She dared not take him upstairs, for fear he should wake again. The magazines and books stayed on their shelves untouched while Norah, rocking Adrian's child on her breast, went on with her thoughts.

She roused herself with a start, as the door opened to let in Adrian and his wife.

Margaret came forward swiftly, her face shining with happiness. Adrian followed. He looked contented, and not vexed as she had thought he would. Though Norah meant to give him up, it was as a knife in her breast to see how he took the cloak from his wife's shoulders. There was a tenderness

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Though Norah meant to give him up, it was as a knife in her breast to see how he took the cloak from his wife's shoulders.

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about it which was quite different from the passion of his actions towards her.

She knew now that while that tenderness lasted, so also did his love last, that indeed *she* had been the temptress. Left to himself Adrian Lewis would be his wife's lover still.

"It was a glorious success!" said Margaret with a little catch in her voice. "I can't thank you enough! They called and shouted. Adrian acted splendidly."

She looked at Adrian proudly and leant her face with a little intimate gesture on his coat sleeve. Then she saw the baby.

"Oh!" she cried aghast. "And he's so good, as a rule. Whatever did he wake for, the naughty boy!"

She took him from the woman's arm with a maddening little air of proprietorship, which was entirely unconscious. Then she buried her face in the wrinkles of his neck, glad to get him back again, as she had been glad to go to the play. Norah saw that Margaret held him quite differently from the way she had done and a great throb of envy, that Margaret had had so much experience of babies, went through her. Her empty arms felt cold and lifeless. She ached for that little warm bundle.

"I'll take him upstairs, the bad scamp!" said Margaret, crooning over him.

She smiled back at the two left in the room, her innocent, trusting, grateful little smile, and then with her precious burden she went upstairs.

Silence fell on the two. Adrian found it difficult to meet Norah's eyes.

"I want to thank you for my chance," he said huskily.

"I'm glad it was a success, but I've something to tell you Adrian. After to-night I couldn't go on with our friendship. The children made me see. I held the baby, and every breath he drew told me what a wicked thing I should be doing if I took you away from them."

Adrian heaved a great sigh. He was glad she had said it—it made things easier.

"I, too, decided that it must stop," he answered her gravely. "You are a good woman, Norah!"

He bent and kissed her hand, missing the mad yearning in her eyes. Even now she would have answered to his touch or his word.

"I can't wait to see Margaret. Tell her I'm glad I stayed," she said quietly.

She went to the door, picking up the cloak which had covered the slim form of his wife. With a shudder she felt him put it round her. His touch aroused within her such pain and misery that she felt she could not bear it. He kept a tight rein on himself, and no sign did he give of whether he too was fighting.

Last night when he had put on her cloak, he had seized her in his arms and had thrown back her head and had kissed her lips. She had had her moment then; in the future, she would only be able to exist on the husks of the past.

With a sob she opened the door.

"Say good-night to Margaret. Good-bye Adrian!"

For a moment as the car drove off, he stood under the clear starlit sky. A look of pain crossed his face. Then he ran indoors, and up the stairs, two at a time, to the bedroom.

HER LITTLE FOOT.

Her little foot, that day we met
Inside the 'bus, was near. She let
Her little foot—not by design,
By chance, of course!—come close to mine.
Ah, me! I seem to feel it yet!

The street lamps flared, 'twas late and wet;
Out of the 'bus I watched her get,
And, rarely shod, I saw it shine,
Her little foot.

I left my 'bus (and my gazette
And pipe as well!). Into love's net
I followed. . . . How could I divine
Our ways would altar-wards incline?
Alack! Upon my neck is set
Her little foot!

B. Franklin Taylor.

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J. S. S.

A Story in which Great Changes Occur.

By D. O'Venden.

"Dash!" said Sybil very improperly, as the long-suffering suit-case refused to shut.

"Thank Heaven," she added aloud, "I shall be able to borrow Hobbs when I get there."

"There" was Shentringham Towers, the residence of young Lady Wyncherly, where Sybil proposed spending two very delightful weeks, beginning with a theatrical fancy-dress ball.

Lady Peggy Wyncherly, an old chum of Sybil's, had married straight from the school-room, and she never completed her autumn house-party without impecunious and popular Sybil Stephens, who went anywhere when she could "contrive" a frock and "borrow" a maid.

Two hours later saw her seated *en route* for Euston, with her luggage on the rack opposite.

"And don't go forgetting it," remarked her brother Bob, skilfully dodging a kiss by shaking hands with great heartiness.

"Well! I've only got one suit-case with me, and it's labelled *and* initialled," retorted Sybil, complacently regarding the "J. S. S." that adorned the article in question.

The Euston to Charing Cross journey was accomplished safely, but here Sybil received a check in the shape of three hours' wait before her train left for Shentringham.

The chance to see how London looked was not to be lost, so she deposited her suit-case with the "Left Luggage" office, received a cryptic printed slip in return, and an instant later was boarding a 'bus with zest.

Life was very simple and uncomplicated, and enjoyable for the next two hours.

It grew rather complex, however, when she

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arrived to claim her luggage, and found four officials trying to deal with thirty people, all engaged on the same quest as herself.

"A brown leather suit-case marked 'J. S. S.,'" she repeated twice to two separate persons, who immediately went off and found something for somebody else.

Time was getting on, and Sybil began to grow impatient. She waited six minutes, and then walked to the side door, peeped in, and at once discovered the familiar initials.

She took possession promptly, hurriedly thrust her ticket over the counter, and raced for her rapidly-filling train.

Arrived at the other end, Sybil found the luxurious car awaiting her, and she snuggled back among the rugs with gleeful anticipation, as the car shot silently ahead.

"What were you asking the station-master about, Terry?" she called suddenly to the chauffeur.

"Why, miss, I was expecting someone else by this train, and as he hasn't turned up. I asked what time the next got in," the man answered over his shoulder.

"No one I know, I suppose, Terry?"

"It's a Mr. Smithe, miss."

"If I were King—no Queen—of England, Terry, I'd make a law compelling *all* Smithes to choose some other name," remarked Miss Stephens firmly.

"Yes, miss," said Terry.

A moment later the car slowed down, and Sybil sprang out, to be hugged fervently by a perfumed vision in tango-red charmeuse with a perfect disregard of three footmen.

"You dear thing!" cried Lady Peggy. "Come right up and have a cup of tea in my boudoir before the—— Well, Terry?"

"Mr. Smithe hasn't come by this train, your ladyship; the next gets in at 8.52."

"Oh, how tiresome!" exclaimed Lady Peggy. "That means he will be late for the dance. Well, you must meet it, that's all. Take the Rolls-Royce; we shall want the other.

"An old chum of Wyncherly's," she explained airily to Sybil, as they mounted the wide, thickly-carpeted stairs that led to her ladyship's boudoir.

"Is he nice?" inquired Sybil.

"I haven't seen him myself—tea, Roberts, and bring some cream-cakes—but he and Wynch were at Rugby and Oxford together. Wynch met him in town, and he came down for the shoot last year, but I was laid low, with a red nose and 'flu' at the time. Of course, he's too busy to come often."

"Oh, he's not one of the Idle Rich, then?" murmured Sybil lazily.

"No, he's a 'Busy Rich'," responded Lady Peggy. "He's junior partner in a big furnishing firm—does a lot of their designing, I believe. Wynch says he's frightfully clever—ah-h! put it down here, Roberts. Now then, cream *and* sugar? Say when!"

"Who else is here?" demanded Sybil presently, biting into a pink cake.

"Stella and Nora Vannis, Kitty Murchison, Reggie Vandaleur——"

She stopped, and raised a questioning eyebrow at Sybil.

"I have promised to be a *sister* to Mr. Vandaleur," remarked that young lady, with a severity somewhat marred by a dimple.

"He probably intends asking you again," warned Lady Peggy.

"I'll propose to Mr. Smithe, if he's anything like," promised Sybil soothingly. "Now tell me all about the ball."

"By the way, what are you, Sybil?" inquired Lady Peggy.

"'Rose' out of 'Milestones.' You remember that awfully ducky white dress—sort of billowy tulle, and rosebuds. How in the world I shall 'one-step' in a crinoline I can't imagine. That reminds me, I must get unpacked at once, and shake out the creases."

"Was the suit-case all you brought?"

"Yes; the rest is coming on 'in advance' behind," explained Sybil lucidly. "I've got all I shall want for to-night."

In another moment she was being greeted with respectful joy by the faithful Hobbs.

"Well, Hobbs," smiled Sybil, sitting on the bed with a serene disregard of the numerous chairs, "I begin to feel I really *am* here now you've arrived."

"If I might ask, miss, what costume will you be wearing at the ball?" asked Hobbs with suppressed eagerness.

"Oh, you just wait! It's simply ducky," cried Sybil gleefully. "Here's the key; the costume's at the top."

She sank into an armchair, and began to remove her hat.

She was thoughtfully spearing it with the pins, when a cry from Hobbs made her turn round, to behold that worthy, with eyes that positively goggled, holding at arm's length a *man's dress suit*.

"What in the world"—began Sybil. "Good gracious, someone must have brought up the wrong case. It's fearfully like mi——"

She stopped, transfixed, as Hobbs turned

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it up on end, and disclosed the initials "J. S. S."

There was a pause of complete stupefaction, during which Sybil got up and walked over to the suit-case, where military brushes, dancing pumps, and a suit of woven silk pyjamas met her horrified gaze.

Some moments are too sacred for words.

Sybil was the first to break the stillness.

"Hobbs," she said, meditatively, "would you say I had an honest face?"

"Y-y-yes, miss," stammered the maid.

"In future, Hobbs," resumed Sybil impressively, "you will know better than to trust people who look honest. They will inevitably turn out to be either company promoters or luggage-snatchers—like me."

Here her gravity suddenly broke down, and she collapsed with uncontrollable laughter among the pillows.

"S-send Lady W-Wyncherly to me," she gasped between her paroxysms.

And Hobbs, still looking dazed, went.

Lady Peggy entered briskly, a minute later.

"What's the mat—Sy-bil!"

"Yes, I know," gurgled the culprit.

She stuffed the sheet into her mouth, and rolled, as Lady Peggy dropped limply into the nearest chair, and ejaculated:

"What *have* you done?"

With a final heave, Sybil sat up, tousled, but articulate.

"All is over between us. The taint in my blood has at last been revealed. I am simply a co-common s-sneak, a thief." She relapsed afresh.

"If you'd give me some idea of what's happened," began her hostess.

"Well, seriously, this is what occurred.

"I had nearly three hours to wait at Charing Cross, so I deposited my suit-case at the 'Left Luggage Office.' When I came back and called for my luggage, there was an awful crowd round the counter, and so I slipped into the side entrance and beheld—well, *that*. It's the living image of mine," she added resentfully.

"But surely they wouldn't let you——"

"They were all at the other end, as it happened, tiresome things."

"But the initials——"

"They're the same as mine. Look, 'J. S. S.'—Joan Sybil Stephens."

"What are you going to do about it?"

Sybil shrugged her shoulders.

"What can I do? The only thing will be to send a wire in the morning.

Sybil got up and walked over to the suit-case, where military brushes, dancing "pumps," and a suit of woven silk pyjamas met her horrified gaze.

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There's no 'up' train to-night, to send it back by."

"And what about your costume?" demanded Lady Wyncherly.

"My costume! Good heavens, I'd forgotten all about it."

Sybil sat up tragically.

"Oh, Peggy, think of it! My billowy tulle reposing at that wretched, *wretched* office, and me without a glad-rag to my name. Could you lend me anything?"

Lady Wyncherly shook her head.

"Nothing that would do, I'm afraid. There's the 'Folly' costume. I got it for Switzerland, last year, but it's practically done for."

Suddenly Sybil's face cleared, as if by magic, and, with an air of suppressed mischief, she glanced at Lady Wyncherly.

"Er—Peggy, do you remember seeing *Tantalising Tommy* with me?"

"Ye—e—s," responded her hostess absently.

"I think," murmured Sybil, "I shall go as 'Tommy.'"

"But what did she wear?" asked Lady Wyncherly, still absently.

Sybil's eyes were limpid pools of innocence, as she extracted something from the suit-case.

"She wore pyjamas."

Lady Wyncherly woke up thoroughly.

"*Sybil!*" she exclaimed, aghast. "I couldn't allow it. You crazy child, what will you do next?"

"Well, why not?" said Sybil, obstinately. "Suppose the owner found out afterwards."

"He won't," asserted Sybil, confidently. "I shall just iron them, and fold them up again."

"Well, I wash my hands of it, anyway," said her ladyship, weakly. "I shan't even call on you in prison."

Sybil smiled serenely, and spread the offending garments on the bed.

II.

"Mr. Smithe, sir?"

"Right! You got my wire?"

"At seven o'clock, sir."

"That's all right. No, only this bag—worse luck," added Mr. Smithe, following in the wake of Terry as he led the way to where the car stood throbbing expectantly.

At a quarter-past nine the motor drew up in front of Shentringham Towers, and Mr. Smithe was shown into the library.

Judging by the distant sounds, a waltz was in progress, but even as he listened, the strains died away; the first dance was over, and immediately after, Lord Wyncherly burst in.

"You old ass, Jack!" was his affectionate greeting, as he wrung his friend's hand "What the dickens makes you come at this time?"

"Couldn't help it," said Jack ruefully. "I've been chasing my luggage all over the show, and had to come without it, now."

"Good Lord! What's been happening? Help yourself to whisky, and tell me the story simply, as to a little child," besought his lordship.

"Well," began Jack, "I put off hiring a fancy dress till the last minute, and left the suit-case at Charing Cross.

"Then I went to Covent Garden, hired a costume—'The Flag Lieutenant'—shoved it in the kit-bag and dropped in to see Ralph Davis.

"I drew it rather fine, and only had three minutes to spare when I got to the station again.

"I called for the suit-case, and if you'll believe me, the bally thing had vanished. You never saw such a dust-up. I raved at them, invented several new adjectives—'pon my word I did—and meanwhile the train went.

"Funny thing, they found a suit-case with the same initials, only the tickets didn't correspond."

"Perhaps they'd given out yours in mistake for that one," suggested Lord Wyncherly.

"That's what I said, but they swore it was impossible under the system. Anyway, they'll wire if there's any news of it. So I went out and bought some 'pumps,' and caught the next train. You'll have to fix me up with sleeping togs for to-night," concluded Mr. Smithe.

"Right you are!" returned Lord Wyncherly, rising. "Now come along and change. I'm not booked for the next; if you buck up you'll be in time for the Lancers."

A quarter-of-an-hour later, Jack Smithe, transformed into an exceeding personable naval lieutenant, made his way into the ball-room, under the protecting wing of Lord Wyncherly.

"Now where the dickens has Peggy got to?" began that gentleman. "Oh, I can see her; come along," and he proceeded to pilot his *protégé* through the crowd.

"Which is Lady Wyncherly?" asked Jack.

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Sybil obeyed the summons, looking adorably flushed and pretty; the introduction was duly performed, and Jack managed to secure three dances. (*Page 82, col. 1.*)

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"The female in the clogs and shawl," explained his lordship, and performed the introduction in characteristic fashion, "Peggy—Jack—Jack—Peggy."

Lady Wyncherly looked round for Sybil, but the damsel was nowhere to be seen, and it was not until the fourth dance that Jack caught a glimpse of "Tantalising Tommy."

He was "one-stepping" with his hostess when Sybil passed them. Jack stopped dead, to the indignation of four couples behind, who immediately collided.

"Awfully sorry," stammered Mr. Smithe to his astonished partner, "I—I thought I saw someone I knew." Some*thing* he knew would have been nearer the mark.

For the remainder of that dance he manœuvred to keep the pyjamas in sight, and by the end had almost convinced himself that he was mistaken.

After all, these patterns were turned out by the hundred. This was a rather unusual style perhaps, but it would be absurd to suppose— Then, suddenly, inspiration came. One of the painted china buttons had been smashed and an odd one substituted. It would be a simple matter to set at rest his perfectly ridiculous suspicions.

Luck favoured him, for, as the one-step concluded, Sybil was just in front of him.

He gave a swift look as she disentangled herself from her partner. There was no mistake; the odd button proclaimed its ownership beyond question, and Jack sat down with his head whirling.

"Jack, old man, have you a partner for the next?" asked Lord Wyncherly coming up.

"Yes, thanks. I say, who is that girl in pyjamas, Wyncherly?"

"Why, that's Peggy's great pal. Come over and be introduced. She's a ripping dancer."

"Stop a minute," said Jack hurriedly, clutching his arm. "What's she supposed to be?"

"I'm blest if I know. Sybil, hi!" called his lordship, before Jack could stop him.

Sybil obeyed the summons, looking adorably flushed and pretty; the introduction was duly performed, and Jack managed to secure three dances.

They romped through the Lancers, floated blissfully through "Tales of Hoffman," and arranged to sit out the Quadrille, No. 17 on the programme.

At last the fateful moment arrived.

"Now for it," muttered Mr. Smithe, as the band struck up an air of Harry Lauder's.

"Where shall we sit?" asked Sybil, tossing back her floating curls for the twentieth time that evening.

"Why don't all girls have dark hair and pink cheeks?" thought Jack. Then, catching sight of the button, he braced himself for the coming ordeal.

"Over here," he said, and indicated a nook rendered private by reason of numerous towering palms.

Sybil sank into her seat with a sigh of relief, and Jack opened fire.

"I have a cousin called Sybil, but she is plump and fair-haired," he began mendaciously. "I can't imagine you with that name, somehow."

"Oh, well, I have another as it happens," said Sybil, with some amusement. "I am really Joan Sybil."

"J. S. S.," said Jack quite distinctly. She stared a little.

"It's a queer coincidence," he continued guilelessly, "but my other name is Shortland—a family one—Jack Shortland Smithe, J. S.——"

Sybil sat up suddenly.

"— S." he concluded.

After a somewhat long pause Sybil said carefully: "Oh!"

With the air of one who light-heartedly changes the subject, he began again.

"Do you know, I've had the time of my life to-day, trying to track a missing suitcase. It——"

Sybil interrupted him.

"This kind of thing wouldn't happen to anyone but me," she observed sadly. "If you'll refrain from giving me in charge for five minutes, I'll tell you everything. Don't laugh *more* than you can help."

She drew a deep breath and began.

III.

Ten days later Mr. Smithe found Miss Stephens in the conservatory.

"Sybil," he said, going up to her, "I thought you'd turned over a new leaf."

"How do you mean?" asked Sybil.

"Well, you restored my luggage, but now you've stolen something else."

Sybil opened her eyes wide, and then suddenly comprehension dawned in them, and she flushed divinely.

"Syb," he murmured, holding her closely, "Make it 'no robbery,' you darling."

"It's all very well," said Miss Stephens later on, "but stealing kisses is as bad as anything else."

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Joyous Elsie Janis

By F. Sleep.

Miss Elsie Janis is one of the brightest stars from the Land of the Stars and Stripes, where she has made innumerable hits both in musical comedy and as an imitator. Americans in London are delighted at her unique opportunities in the new production at the Palace Theatre; British theatre-goers are equally enthusiastic. She is real 'cute!

The straight-backed, keen-eyed, well-set-up man—perhaps it would be quicker after all to say "the stage-doorkeeper"—gazed scornfully at my card. I glanced round at the little odds and ends—letters in alphabetical compartments, keys, telephones, a fire extinguisher—that decorated his tiny office. A chorus girl made up, scantily dressed, provocative, *séduisante*, scenting the air with Shem-el-Nessim, fluttered down and fluttered back.

All these things thrilled me once, but I am used to stage doors now. I yawned a little until they led me to Miss Elsie Janis, her dressing-room.

Dressing-rooms are all alike and all different. They have a family resemblance, and yet borrow an individuality from their temporary owner.

"How do you do?" said Miss Janis, utterly fresh and charming; dark and slender, and graceful, with wonderfully expressive eyes.

It is the first step in an interview which makes or mars you. I shook hands, and murmured my heartfelt thanks. She indicated a chair. We were, I felt, getting on famously.

"Later," I said, "I may have to ask you what part it is your ambition to play, and what is your favourite recreation, and whether you have ever been nearly killed. The public insists on it. At present let me be as rational as possible. Do you like England?"

"I guess I do," she smiled softly. "I have written a little poem (the nicest American girls say, 'a lirl pome') about your country. I write poetry, you know. I have made $195 at present out of it. See here——"

She handed me a copy of the verses. I quote a couple, by permission:

Compassed about by salt blue seas,
Bearing aloft her far-flung fame,
She watches in majestic ease
For "England" is her name!

Mother of Hawkins, Raleigh, Drake,
Ever she breeds them still the same,
Proud in her cause their lives to stake—
For "England" is her name!

"I call your Drake and Hawkins real 'cute,'" declared Miss Janis, after I had declaimed the lines in my rich baritone accents. "I just love reading about live men. They went some, those Elizabethans."

"Tell me about yourself, Miss Janis, if you will," I murmured. Of course, I yield to none in my admiration of Drake and Hawkins, but they were far off, and Miss Janis was in the living, palpitating present. Moreover, I had my duty to my paper to consider. I brushed Drake and Hawkins gracefully

Miss Janis is not only an accomplished actress, but has also written songs and a book. They are as charming as their author, and the sale has been enormous.

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aside, in a manner of speaking, so to say.

"Well," she reflected aloud, "I've played in a good many musical comedies you don't know on this side, like *The Vanderbilt Cup*, and *The Hoyden*, *The Fair Co-Ed*, and *The Slim Princess*. There is a turrible sad story to tell about *The Slim Princess*. You see, after the hard work of rehearsal was over, I began to—er—get a little stouter, in fact."

"Your mother was pleased, I expect," I suggested. Too well I know the maternal heart.

"Yes, but not the stage-manager," retorted Miss Janis severely. "He said I must stay thin to be a slim princess. So I dieted and walked and had plenty of vinegar in my salad, and never touched cream, or wine, or sugar in my coffee."

To look at Miss Janis, one would never suspect she had ever experienced any difficulty in keeping slender. But I am merely her mouthpiece. I tell you what she told me. Personally, I don't believe she was ever fa—— Well, look at her pictures and judge for yourself.

"And is it true," I hazarded—one always hazards these things. We journalists lead frightfully hazardous lives—"that you have a house called 'El-Jan' in the United States?"

"Why, sure," replied Miss Janis, arranging a curl, that was already just heavenly, in front of the mirror. "You see, 'El' stands for Elsie, and 'Jan' for Janis. The house is at Columbus, O. It sounds so Spanish, don't you think?"

"Quite."

"I was raised in Columbus, O., you know," she added thoughtfully.

"No wonder you call your house by a Spanish name," I edged in, but Miss Janis was busy with the curl again.

"Don't forget to tell them about my imitations," was her last charge. "In the States I imitate Ethel Barrymore and George Cohan, and I don't suppose you've heard of either, so over here I shall have to imitate somebody else. I admire your Cissy Loftus. She is some imitator. But imitation is my long suit, too. Let me show you Sarah Bernhardt."

Imitation is this young actress' delight, and she can hit off Sarah Bernhardt and other famous folk to the life.

She showed me Sarah Bernhardt. I have never seen the Divine Sarah in the flesh, and now I have

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no ambition so to do. I would rather see her imitated by Elsie Janis, if I may say so without disrespect.

"Everybody loves that particular imitation, just like you do," said Miss Janis thoughtfully. "With audiences I think it may possibly happen because they like to pretend they have seen the original. They applaud me like anything. It looks as if they've seen us both, and appreciate the finer points of my little skit. I should do the same in their position, I expect."

"To what do you attribute your success?" I inquired. This is one of the cardinal points of an interview. "If you will tell me that, I will be silent as to what part it is your ambition to play—they all say 'Juliet'—and your recreation, and possible escapes from death."

"As a matter of fact," she answered, "while I have won my present success in the musical-comedy world, I had my first training in a stock company, and for two years played *ingénue rôles* with the Neill Stock Company in my home town, Columbus, O. I acted in everything—comedy, tragedy, Shakespeare, and modern drama.

"In that time I played nearly one hundred *rôles*, many of them serious, some of them emotional, such as would come to the regular *ingénue* of any stock company. We did a new play every week, and the training was of the greatest possible value to me. Previously, I had only done imitations at semi-professional affairs, like church entertainments.

"Then, because I could dance, and give imitations—and sing a little—I had the offers of big salaries from the musical-comedy managers, and I had to say farewell, with regret, to the dramatic heroines."

Alas! the call-boy intervened, and cut short my interview with Miss Janis. Hastily I collected myself and left.

I have tried to convey all the charm of Miss Janis' personality and appearance. That I know to be impossible—the pen is not made, the ink is not distilled, or whatever they do to ink. But I have striven my best.

Miss Janis' New York home is a delightful flat overlooking Central Park, and her prowess in music and the culinary arts is no less great than in the field of sport, where she has won distinction in tennis, golf, and swimming.

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THE WAY OF THE ENGLISH.

How Hugh Weston Kept the Flag Flying.

By Jean D'Auvergne.

The winter season was at its height, and the great Moscow music-hall restaurant filled to its full extent. In winter, when the snow covered the ground, the pleasure-loving Muscovite made the long drive out to the famous restaurant two or three times a week.

The place was some three miles out of town and the sleigh drive through the Petrovsky Park came as a pleasant sensation after the theatre, and a powerful stimulant for the worn-out revellers returning to business the next morning. The performance only began at twelve. The cooking was the best in Moscow, and the champagne as expensive as even the most pretentious merchant could desire.

And so each one of the dainty little tables that were spread about the marble-pillared hall, each one of the sumptuously decorated cabinets that formed a gallery like a tier of boxes at the opera, was occupied by the eternal combination of man and woman.

At one of the front tables close to the orchestra sat a man with the word Englishman stamped on every line of his clean-cut features. It was Christmas Eve by the English style, and, although most Englishmen preferred to celebrate their Christmas on the Russian date, Hugh Weston was far too English to countenance such profanation of old associations. For years he had been accustomed to drive out to the restaurant on Christmas Eve, and to-night found him in his usual place.

It was not a pleasant time for a Britisher to be in Moscow, for the Boer War was at its most painful stage, and feeling ran high. In the streets the gutter boys, recognising the turned-up trousers or the double collar of the Anglo-Saxon, reviled him with shouts of "the Boers are coming" and expected him to turn and run, while only a few days before, the British Consul had been openly insulted at a public dinner.

And yet Hugh Weston seemed to be popular with everyone, from the Jew director with the sleek face and pin-point eyes down to the waiters, who treated him with a deference accorded only to their best customers.

He was a little man of over forty, neatly dressed and well set-up. His hair was slightly tinged with grey, but otherwise he had all the vigour and energy of a younger man. Twenty years in Russia had only served to strengthen his belief in his own countrymen. His smallness of stature was amply compensated for by the largeness of his heart, and, above all, he was distinguished for the never-failing cheerfulness of his spirits.

To-night he represented, perhaps, the only one of all the throng who felt lonely and ill-at-ease. To tell the truth, he was tired of Russia. The loud gaiety of his neighbours jarred on his nerves, and the long succession of imitation Spanish dancers and of Russian singers, whose charms were of more importance than their art, palled on him. He glanced at his programme to see the next turn: May Wilson, English singer and dancer.

"Bah!" he muttered to himself. "Six to one she's only a German, and in any case she's not worth waiting for."

But still he waited.

As the curtain rose, Weston looked up languidly. The girl on the stage was unmistakably English, young and fresh, with

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something refined about her eyes which distinguished her from the other performers. In a few minutes, Weston had conceded that she was almost beautiful.

Her weak but rather pleasing little voice could hardly be heard above the general din. She had no tricks, none of the little touches which proclaim the genuine artiste. Indeed, she looked strangely out of place, and Weston at once began to reflect on the fate which had brought her to such a place as Moscow. No one seemed to be taking the slightest interest in the peformance, and he felt sorry for her.

He leant forward with his elbow on the table, trying to catch the words of her song and following her movements with a new-born interest. In the great market of pleasure it was the sellers who interested him far more than the buyers, and the girl on the stage seemed so frail and weak that his sympathies were won at once.

Then from a table close by, a coarse, heavy-bearded German in his cups, recognising that she was English, drew his hand across his mouth and, leaning back, let out a long, piercingly brutal hiss.

Weston sat up as if he had been shot. He clenched his fist and half rose from his chair. Controlling himself with a violent effort, he sat down again, while with his fingers grasping the table he strove to master the anger that was choking him.

The girl on the stage faltered and her cheeks grew scarlet. Her wild, frightened eyes stared round the room helplessly until they met his. He gave her a friendly little nod to reassure her. Then, taking courage, she went on with her song.

The incident was not repeated, but when the curtain fell there was a contemptuous indifference.

Weston called a waiter and sent him for the director. In a few seconds the sleek, clean-shaven Jew, rubbing his hands and bowing respectfully, made his appearance.

"Good evening, Mr. Weston. What can I do for you?"

"Who is that English girl you have here?" he asked curtly.

"Ah! that is Miss Wilson. Mr. Weston would like to see her, perhaps?"

"No," he replied, more curtly than before.

Mr. Weston was evidently in a bad temper. Mr. Weston had spent many roubles in the place. He was a good client. He must be conciliated, smoothed down, and calmed.

And so the little Jew cleared his throat and continued suavely:

"Ah, yes! She is no good. Mr. Weston is quite right. Trust Mr. Weston to know the real artiste. Next week, however, I have a little American girl who——"

"That will do," interrupted Weston savagely. "I don't want to know about next week. Can't you answer my questions? Who is she? Where does she come from? What do you know about her?"

The little Jew shrugged his shoulders.

"What should I know about her? She is like all the others. She came from Berlin, I think. I really know nothing. She only arrived yesterday. But the American girl is——"

Weston jumped to his feet.

"Hang your American!" he shouted "That will do. That's all I want to know."

The little Jew took his departure, thinking that Mr. Weston's head was more easily affected than it used to be.

Weston paid his bill and went out, still savage with indignation. During the long sleigh-drive home his brain began to work, and schemes of revenge occupied his mind. By the time he had reached his house a plan had formed itself, and a night's sleep only served to strengthen him in his resolution to carry it out.

He rose early and made a careful toilet. Then he went to the telephone and rang up the manager of the restaurant. With very little trouble he engaged for that night the first twenty-four tables nearest the stage. The most important part of his plan was accomplished. There now remained only the guests to occupy the tables.

As it was Christmas-time all the Englishmen from the outlying cotton-mills had foregathered in Moscow. Weston took a sleigh and made a tour of the hotels, inquiring for all the Englishmen he could find.

There was no question of class, no distinction of any kind. The Cambridge Blue travelling through Moscow on his way to Japan and the fitter from the gasworks received the same invitation to dine that night at the "Grand Hotel" at nine o'clock. The only qualification was that the guest must be a Britisher, and, as everyone knew Weston to be one of the richest and best-hearted men in the colony, no questions were raised.

By lunch-time he had collected a small army of fifty—very mixed, it is true, but all British to the backbone.

At the "Grand" that evening he gave them an English dinner, or as near the real thing as the Russian *chef* could supply.

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Expense was no object. He was rich, and this was to be the evening of his life.

Towards the end of the meal he began to feel a little uncomfortable. Speech-making was not his strong point, yet he was going to make a speech. As the coffee and liqueurs were being handed round he rapped for silence and rose nervously to his feet.

"Gentlemen," he said, "you are wondering, perhaps, why I have asked you here to-night. Well, I'm going to tell you. There is a little English girl out at 'Rosenthal's.' Last night, when she came on, she was hissed just because of the war, and because she's English. Altogether, she's having a pretty rotten time. To-night I've taken the front part of the room and I want you fellows to come out with me and to give her the time of her life.

"I don't want you to make any bad feeling or to raise a row of any sort. That won't do just now. So you must all keep sober and behave yourselves decently. But to-night is Christmas night, and at the end of her turn let us see to it that she has the biggest applause of anyone.

"I'm sure you are all in with me in this show, but if there's anyone who wants to back out—well, he can go now and there will be no harm done. That's all."

He sat down again with a nervous smile on his face, while they cheered him and rattled with their glasses on the table and sang, "For he's a jolly good fellow." A wild buzz of conversation followed. Advice was freely offered, and accepted or rejected according to its worth. Weston engaged the Cambridge Blue as his lieutenant, and between them they allotted tables to little groups of twos and threes so that there might be no disorder on arriving.

Then towards half-past eleven they all set out, taking care not to make their entry together, and in this way their connection one with another passed unnoticed.

The little army's behaviour was perfect in its decorum. The men who composed its modest units drank their champagne and chatted quietly with each other. Only the commanding officer was nervous. The two head-waiters were in constant attendance upon him, and sundry commissions to the flower-sellers were carried out without attracting any special notice.

When each of the reserved tables had been provided with a costly bouquet, and every available flower in the place had been bought up, the little man seemed more at ease. There was only one thing more for him to do.

He called for a piece of paper and a pencil, scratched his head for a moment, and then scribbled down a few words. He handed the slip to the Cambridge Blue at his side, and watched him eagerly as he read. When it had received the latter's approval, Weston folded it up carefully, and told the waiter to have it delivered to No. 23 just before she came on to the stage.

Then, with a little sigh of relief, he settled down comfortably to wait.

In the dressing-room, which she shared with three German girls, No. 23 sat waiting for her turn. There was a tired look on the little painted face, and the lines under her eyes seemed to be more accentuated than ever by the rouge and pencilling which had been somewhat liberally applied.

For her it had been a miserable Christmas. She had no friends in Moscow, no one even whom she knew beyond the three German girls, who chaffed her shamelessly about her simplicity. Her depression was aggravated by the dread of the approaching "turn." Only to-day the news had come in of Buller's retreat, and she feared a repetition of last night's performance.

Listlessly she heard the curtain go down on the "turn" preceding her own. She rose to her feet and went hastily to the mirror to put a few refractory curls into their place, and to add a little rouge to the dry, parched lips.

The girl who had just been singing came into the room and threw her clothes angrily on the floor.

"Nothing doing to-night," she said in German. "Rotten crowd! No one's drinking, and they are all as silent as mice."

No. 23 was just preparing to cross over to the stage when a messenger boy put a note into her hands. She opened it quickly and read the brief contents:

Sing your best to-night for the sake of the old country.

She gave a curious little smile. Then, shrugging her shoulders, she went on to the stage. Nervous and ill at ease, she looked down at the sea of faces in front of her, wondering who had sent her the note, while the orchestra played through the opening bars of her song.

The audience in the front part of the room was all attentive and suddenly silent. Somewhat alarmed by the unwonted stillness, she started to sing. She had no voice and very

["THE WAY OF THE ENGLISH" continued overleaf.]

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little talent, but before she had reached the end of the first verse she had struck a note to which the heart of every Britisher in the room responded.

Germans and Italians understand good music and feel its inspiring influence, but the Englishman opens the flood-gates of his emotions to music of a much lighter nature, and in Englishmen living abroad in the wilds of Borneo or West Africa, the most vulgarly sentimental music-hall ditty stirs the heart to its inmost depths far more effectively than any German folk-song or Italian romance.

So it was to-night. Stupid little words they were:

"Bluebell, a wrong wants righting,
Brave men must risk their lives.
Soldiers in arms are fighting;
Each for his country strives."

Yet there was scarcely a man there who had not some relation or friend at the front, and the song brought a catch into more than one throat. The song had made a great hit in London, but here amongst the eager little crowd of Britishers, many of whom had not been home for years, the effect was far greater.

They listened to her eagerly, leaning forward and straining their ears to catch her every word while she sang through the three verses of the song, and when the last chorus was repeated, they began mechanically to beat time with their feet to the tune of the march.

Then, as she withdrew with a little bow, the applause broke forth—frantic, frenzied applause that shook the hall to its foundations. Forgotten were the crowds of Russians behind. It was England cheering for the English, intoxicated with the wine of sentimental patriotism.

Bouquet after bouquet was hurled on to the stage—expensive roses all the way from Nice—while the cheering was prolonged until it seemed as though it would never stop. The Cambridge Blue turned to the little man by his side who had engineered this triumph. He had not seen such things in England, and did not know the freedom of Russian life.

"Good heavens, Weston!" he cried, "there will be the dickens of a row now!"

But the little man paid no attention. His eyes were glistening and his cheeks were flushed, while his mouth opened wide in a long sustained "Bravo!"

The Cambridge Blue had made a mistake. The crowd behind was much too lazy and too good-natured to trouble at this time of the evening about national hate. They had been waiting for something to enliven the proceedings, and, in any case, no one understood the meaning of the song. And so, when the little singer appeared again in response to the applause, the shouts of "*Bis*" from the back were as loud as the English "encores" in front.

The girl stepped forward, trembling with delight. Self-assurance had returned, and she held up her hand for silence. She spoke a few words to the conductor and the orchestra struck up "Give my regards to Leicester Square."

It was all very stupid and mawkishly sentimental, but at the moment it was tremendously serious, and any other song would probably have fallen flat. As the chorus started and visions of Piccadilly, Regent Street, the Empire, the Alhambra, all the teeming centre of pleasure-loving London, which to the Englishman abroad is the only London, floated up before the mind, recalling the careless days of the past, the host of the evening sprang to his feet and started singing.

In a moment he was joined by every man in the room, English and Russian alike. The audience was the slave of the little figure with the white stockings and the silver-spangled dress. Round the stage she marched, her arms swinging and her face all smiles, while the conductor roused his men to greater efforts with each repetition of the chorus.

"Mention me to the boys down there,
They'll understand."

The singers were in grim earnest now, and the raucous voices made the rafters ring. In the galleries, along which were ranged the private cabinets, the occupants opened the doors and leant forward to see who was the new favourite that was disturbing their supper.

The director stood at a side door surveying the scene in open astonishment and surprised delight and repeating to himself: "Mad Englishmen, all mad." Only the waiters did not cease their bustle to and fro, but continued their task of opening fresh bottles and taking away the empty ones, indifferent to the applause and intent only on their business.

For ten minutes the audience kept her there, singing, shouting, applauding. And when at last the tired conductor could no

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longer raise his arm and the curtain fell, No. 23 had won the triumph of her life.

* * * * *

That night, or rather that morning, for it was five o'clock before the place closed, as Weston drove her to her home in his "troika," the inevitable reaction after the excitement of the evening came over him, and the feeling of loneliness which had depressed him the night before returned more strongly than ever.

The frozen air and the clear, crisp snow, the wild yet almost silent career of the horses, and the merry jingle of the sleigh-bells ringing out in the calm stillness of the early morning, made him feel the need of companionship, and drew him closer to the girl beside him.

He looked at her and saw that she was shivering. The rough tweed coat she was wearing was no protection against the biting cold, and he made a silent resolution that his first duty the next day would be to purchase a fur coat. As he looked at the little face, half-hidden by the scarf she was wearing, and noted the pale blue eyes glistening with the cold, a great feeling of pity surged over him.

Already she inspired him with that most dangerous of sentiments, which is half love and half compassion, and he began to speculate on the possibilities of the future. A neigh from one of the horses, which seemed to say, "You fool! You fool!" disturbed his dream. He laughed to himself bitterly as he remembered the old proverb: "There's no fool like an old fool." The thing was ridiculous.

Suddenly he became aware that she was speaking to him. The little voice rang very pleasantly in his ears, and he noticed unconsciously that she spoke well and correctly, and quite unlike the average English girl he was accustomed to see on the Russian variety-stage.

"You have spent a great deal of money on me to-night," she said.

"That's nothing," he muttered awkwardly, and then he added: "What does it matter as long as you enjoyed yourself? And it has been a great evening, hasn't it?"

Her answer was very grave and solemn.

"It has been the best Christmas in my life."

They were silent for a little, and presently the driver drew up before a shoddy, untidy-looking boarding-house. Weston helped her out of the "troika," a feeling of emptiness in his heart as he realised that the drive was at an end.

Putting her little gloved hand into his and looking down at the ground, she began to speak hurriedly, thickly, as though the words were choking her.

"You have been very good to me," she said. "You have made me very happy. I would like to pay you back somehow. But there is nothing—nothing I can do for you in return. I like to think that you are different from the others. You understand, don't you? And there is nothing—nothing, is there?"

The little hand trembled violently.

"Nothing," he replied hoarsely. "It's just good-bye and good luck, and all——"

She made a step towards the door, then turned back as though she had forgotten something.

"Would you like to kiss me?" she whispered shyly.

For a moment a wild desire came over him to take her in his arms and crush her lips to his. Then again one of the horses neighed and again he seemed to hear the words: "You fool! You fool!"

With a great effort he controlled his feelings.

"No—not that, May," he stammered. "Not that. Let us keep this evening apart from all the others. I am old and at the autumn of my life and you are just beginning yours. There can be no question of any sentiment between us, and I do not want your charity. No—much better not, little girl."

He stopped awkwardly, not knowing what to say, and released her hand.

Some twenty yards down the street a policeman was warming his hands at the watchman's fire. The "troika" driver sat motionless and apathetic, all huddled up in his little box-like seat and already half-asleep. There was no sound except the occasional clamp of a horse's hoof on the frozen snow. Far away in the moonlight the great towers of the Kremlin stood out like sentinels of the night.

She made up her mind at once. Resolutely, boldly, she lifted up her face and her fair, young eyes, deep and blue as the sea, met his.

"I would like you to kiss me," she said bravely.

He bent forward and touched her lips, and in that hour Hugh Weston knew that he had found his life-partner.

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THE HATRED OF KHIL CAYUSE.

A Story of the Blackfeet Indians.

By H. Mortimer Batten.

I.

Hanse McGuire was by no means one of Fortune's favourites.

For ten years he struggled hard on a homestead in Saskatchewan, and when at length the little place began to yield some promise, McGuire's only child, Bertha, then an infant of three, fell suddenly ill.

"You must leave the prairies and get into the foothills," the doctor advised finally. "The child must be out of doors for years to come, or she'll never live to be a woman."

McGuire accepted the state of affairs without a murmur. He applied for a post under the Hudson Bay Company, and to his surprise got it. Once again he started life anew amidst strange conditions, this time in the heart of the forest foothills in northern Alberta.

Daily it was borne in upon McGuire that the success of the trading post, and probably the lives of himself and his household, were dependent upon the good faith of the Indians.

"Make Johnnie Indian your friend, and he's the straightest cuss you'll run up against," observed the trader to his wife one day. "But once let him imagine that you've done him an injury and he'll wait half his life to get even with you."

Mrs. McGuire nodded gravely, and laid aside the musquash pelts she was sorting. "Better lose over a deal than quarrel over it," she agreed. "I was thinking, Hanse, that when Khil Cayuse, the Chief, returns, we'll make him our honoured guest and treat him right royally. His people have unwavering faith in him. They think he is the greatest chief that ever lived."

"So he might have been when he left them," observed the trader. "The question is what will he be when he comes back? City education isn't good for the raw savage."

It happened that the trader's fears regarding Khil Cayuse, Chief of the Lake Minook people, were correct. When he left his tribe to do trade in the south, the chief was a fine, strong fellow, but at Fort Canyon he fell into the hands of a trader who was known to be utterly devoid of scruples. Khil Cayuse was treated generously and well till the trader had secured a firm grip of him.

At the end of the first year, the braves who had accompanied him having returned, the Chief was trading his furs for fire-water.

For two years he moved back and forth, a slave to the trader, but a worse slave to himself. His youth slipped from him prematurely; he became old and lean-faced, while an eternal craving gnawed at his vitals.

One day an idea occurred to the trader. He bought Khil Cayuse new garments and a new canoe, and giving him plenty of provisions and several bottles of fire-water, told him to return to his people at Lake Minook with some cases of fire-water as a presentation.

"Tell them plenty more where those come from," the trader added as an afterthought. "Tell them plenty good trade at Fort Canyon when they come along with their fur."

This time Khil Cayuse did not turn back, for with him he carried sufficient fire-water to satisfy his thirst. But when he saw the new trading post on the lake margin he decided upon a fresh course of action. He beached his canoe and made camp, then settled down quietly to finish the remaining bottles of bad whisky given him to present to the tribe.

This done, Khil Cayuse again launched his canoe, and set off for the new trading post to buy more. He did not realise that this store would conduct its business on different lines from the one he had left

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behind; he had known only one trading post, the one that had proved his ruin.

Hanse McGuire looked up to see a tall, stooping redskin, thin as a January wolf, enter the store. Khil Cayuse slouched to the counter, and slammed down two five-dollar bills.

"Two bottles hootch (whisky)," he demanded with quiet confidence.

McGuire stared at the man aghast. For an Indian to suggest buying hootch from a trader is a pointed insult to that trader should he be of the proper sort, for the law says that hootch must not be sold to the Indian, and only the very lowest transgress the law in this direction. Thus Khil Cayuse was guilty of an unpardonable breach of etiquette in demanding fire-water at a Hudson Bay outpost.

"Goodness! we don't sell hootch here, my son," answered the trader, swallowing his indignation. "This is a decent trading post. I'll sell you a Winchester rifle if you like."

For a moment the Indian stared blankly. The pangs of thirst suddenly returned to him. "You don't sell hootch?" he repeated incredulously.

"Sure we don't. No demand for it in these quarters. We're starting a white ribbon brigade."

Slowly the brow of Khil Cayuse clouded. He felt, no doubt, as a boy would feel on being refused the possession of an airgun on account of his extreme youth. Moreover, he did not believe the trader. He had often heard the other trader whom he knew, refuse hootch to unknown red men.

"You tell me lie," said Khil Cayuse slowly. "I give you good money. You give me hootch."

An angry flush crept over Hanse McGuire's face. The Indian's quiet assurance and authoritative tones nettled him. He leant over the bench staring into the face of the stranger.

"I'll give you something else to take out with you pretty quick, my son," he said slowly. "You come here asking for hootch, and I'll learn you in two ticks what you're up against. Now git!"

Whether Khil Cayuse understood or not there was no telling, for he never flinched, and at that moment John, McGuire's Indian house-boy, strode by, stared first at the visitor then at his master, and was promptly overcome with wonderment.

The long fingers of the Indian crept slowly down the bench till they touched the spring of a marten trap resting there. It was John who shouted a warning. McGuire leapt aside just in time to avoid the stunning blow the Indian dealt at his head with the heavy steel trap. A corner of it grazed his temple, leaving an ugly gash, and for a moment making him dizzy with pain.

McGuire's fiery Celtic temper had already got the better of his prudence. He caught the Indian's descending wrist, and at the same moment cleared the bench at a bound. With a wrench he flattened Khil Cayuse across the trading counter, then raising him bodily, dropped the man through the door and down the steps beyond.

"That's how we treat you quitters who come here asking for hootch," he cried, and then quickly barred and bolted the door.

Now it happened that Bertha, fit and strong once more, was alone in the compound, and seeing the tall stranger thus maltreated, her tender young heart softened towards him. At first she tried to lift Khil Cayuse to his feet, while the Indian, limp as a damp cloth, stared at her with eyes and mouth wide open. Failing in this, the child squatted before him, as though to keep him company, while Khil Cayuse continued to stare in blank astonishment.

"You very much hurt?" Bertha inquired, and without a word the Indian rose to his feet, still staring at her, and began to walk slowly towards his canoe.

"You want my necklace?" asked the child. "See, I give it to you. We are friends now." Then, repeating a favourite phrase of her father's, she added: "Plenty more where that come from."

In a half-dazed fashion, the Indian took the necklace of plain blue beads, stowing it away in his wallet. He entered his canoe and paddled slowly down the creek, his eyes travelling back and forth from the gaily-attired little figure on the bank to the closed door of the trading post.

Hanse watched from the window till the canoe was out of sight; then he turned to the Indian boy standing behind him. "Guess that fellow won't come butting around for a week or two," he observed. "What you looking at me like that for, John? Happen to know who he is? I don't."

"I know," John answered solemnly. "It is Khil Cayuse—old Chief!"

For a moment McGuire stared at the boy blankly. "That man Khil Cayuse!" he repeated. "Why in Jupiter didn't you tell me?"

Slowly it dawned upon the trader that by

["THE HATRED OF KHIL CAYUSE" continued overleaf.]

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insulting Khil Cayuse he had insulted the Chief's people also. The good faith he had established among them with such care and patience was now lost, and worse still—a thousand times worse—was the fact that the lives of his household were in peril should Khil Cayuse succeed in turning his people against them.

II.

When darkness fell, John was sent forth to the camp at the lake margin to act as scout for the trading post, and next morning he returned with the news that the Indians had held a great festival to celebrate the home-coming of their Chief. During the ceremonies Khil Cayuse had made a speech in which he cursed and condemned the white traders who had built their post by the creek. The listening braves, carried away by their Chief's eloquence, at once adopted his attitude and broke into a heathen war-chant.

To Hanse McGuire this news was far from amusing. His worst fears confirmed, he knew there was nothing for it but to send his wife and child to a place of safety, under the guidance of the faithful John, while he strove to restore the good faith he had lost by his hasty action.

Moreover, McGuire realised that Khil Cayuse was now utterly unsuitable to act as Chief of the Lake Minook people. He would sow in their midst the germs of evil, of vice and debauchery, which, in those days were undermining the strength of the Indian nations throughout the great North West.

While John was busy loading the canoe which was to convey Mrs. McGuire and the child to a place of safety, the trader led him aside.

"When I have had time to get well away," he said, "tell them that I have gone to the teepees to try to make peace with Khil Cayuse. If I am not back by to-morrow morning, you take them away, and tell the chief factor to send along another man at once. Savvee?"

John nodded comprehensively and watched his master's departure into the forest. McGuire went by the way they knew as the old trail, which led through the forest in a straight line towards the Indian encampment.

All was silent as he approached the teepees, till a swarm of dogs ran out to meet him. McGuire kicked his way through them, heading towards the council tent. In his hand he carried a new Winchester rifle, and a row of brass cartridges gleamed in his belt. A brave looked out from one of the tents and met the trader's customary salute with a face as expressionless as that of a bronze image.

McGuire scented hostility in the very air.

"I want to hold speech with Khil Cayuse," he said authoritatively. "Tell him I have much to say to him."

The brave slouched into the council tent, from which issued the low hum of voices, and presently reappeared, motioning the trader to enter.

At one side of the tent sat Khil Cayuse, the elders of the tribe gathered round him. As McGuire entered, he realised, with sudden apprehension, that he could not address the Chief without turning his back upon some of the assembly. Half stifled by the unwholesome atmosphere of the place he turned to Khil Cayuse with an air of cool assurance.

He spoke kindly and gently to the Chief, saying that he had no knowledge that it was the leader of the Lake Minook tribe who had entered the trading post yesterday, and left it with such surprising suddenness. Finally, he took the cartridge belt from his loins and handed it to Khil Cayuse, as also the rifle and the rest of his hunting gear.

Khil Cayuse took the gifts gravely; then, seeing the man unarmed before him he broke into a mocking laugh.

"Khil Cayuse accepts your gifts," he cried, "and Khil Cayuse is satisfied, because he has caught you also."

At that moment a faint creaking sound behind him caught the trader's expectant ears. Instantly he ducked, and as he did so an arrow whistled through the air above his head. It tore through the leather of the teepee above the elders, and vanished from view.

In an instant, Hanse McGuire's attitude changed from that of the suave, soft-voiced man of business to that of a cornered tiger. Like a whirlwind he turned, and the Indian whose hand still held the bow, disappeared backwards from his place on the council log, and was seen no more. McGuire backed to the door. In his hand he held a small, polished revolver, hitherto concealed.

"No," he cried savagely, levelling the weapon at the head of the chief, "Khil Cayuse has not caught me yet. And because he has the heart of a grass snake Khil Cayuse will give back that rifle and the cartridges before I spatter his brains among the elders. Quick, Khil Cayuse, I am waiting."

The Chief had already seen enough of the white race to know that they usually mean

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what they say, while the trader's sudden change of attitude frightened him. Sullenly he handed back the gifts, and as the trader took them his revolver swept the circle of men with suggestive significance.

"Listen to me, you men of Lake Minook," cried the trader. "These things I give to Silent River, because he is a brave man, beside whom Khil Cayuse is as a whimpering woman. Come forward, Silent River."

The young brave obeyed, and at McGuire's bidding strapped on the cartridge belt and took up the rifle. Then he returned to his place on the council log, the rifle laid across his knees.

"Listen to me again," cried the trader. "I tell you Khil Cayuse is no longer worthy of his place as Chief of this tribe. Ere he went to the city he was a good man and a valiant one, but since then a great evil has entered into him, and he has become vile as the wolf in the forest. His very soul is rotten within him. Is he not wasted in body—as little like the Khil Cayuse of old as the moon is like the sun? If he remains your Chief you, too, will become lean and wasted, and your souls will rot within you.

"Listen again. Does it seem well that you should quarrel with me because Khil Cayuse, who has become evil, wishes it? Have I not been your friend? Have I not given you medicines when you were in pain which caused the pain to cease? Ere I came your children died of hunger, but now you have always plenty. You have blankets to lie upon, dogs to pull your sledges, and many good foods to eat. If you lose me, you will lose these things also, but if you lose only Khil Cayuse and appoint another Chief you will continue to live on in happiness as you have lived since I came. Think well ere you answer."

A long silence followed. Then the young warrior, Silent River, arose.

"The trader has spoken truly," he said. "I, too, have visited the city, and I know well of the rottenness that has consumed the soul of Khil Cayuse. Was it not I who accompanied him to Fort Canyon? There are many Indians there, broken and wasted. All that they have goes to buy fire-water. There is nothing left of them but their thirst.

"Khil Cayuse has drunk of this evil. It has burnt the good within him. The very air that leaves his lips is a disease that will spread amongst us. Is it not better that I should become your Chief?"

The young brave was a mighty man, and beloved of his people. McGuire spoke again, gently and persuasively, and again Silent River answered. When Khil Cayuse rose to speak the elders silenced him, and he went forth from the council tent no longer Chief of the Lake Minook people.

III.

When Hanse McGuire had dispatched an Indian to bear news to the trading post that all was well, he remained at the teepees to take part in the ceremonies that succeeded the coming of Silent River as Chief. By many judicious speeches he managed to win back the favour of the people, and to establish, even more firmly than before, their good faith in him and the trading post.

Yet when the trader returned home that night he knew that he was leaving behind him a divided camp; there were many who were jealous of Silent River, and who remembered Khil Cayuse as he had been in the days ere he visited Fort Canyon.

The trader's fears were not unfounded. Broken in spirit and in health, driven from his place of eminence among his people, Khil Cayuse felt himself grievously wronged by the white race, and his savage spirit became resolved in one great purpose. At first he did not realise that his time was precious; ere long he would be forgotten, but he himself would not forget.

As autumn merged into winter a change became manifest in Khil Cayuse. The racking cough, which for over a year had troubled him, became more evident. Slowly the sullen truth was borne in upon him. His manhood was slipping away; his very dogs were losing their fear of him. Finally he found himself left on the trail by the warriors whom once he had led.

Khil Cayuse returned to the teepees, his soul heavy within him, his purpose no less resolute. He took his place among the old men, and like them he was hollow-cheeked and dull-eyed. The old squaws brought him savoury dishes, and the young squaws put their children on his knees. But the face of Khil Cayuse was towards the Great Divide, and ere the winter was half spent he could walk but slowly, as a very old man walks.

Often he visited the trading post—stood on the frozen creek below and stared up at it. From the window McGuire did not recognise the feeble, tottering figure on the ice, and once, seeing him there, the trader sent little Bertha down with a can of hot coffee for the old brave. Khil Cayuse stared

["THE HATRED OF KHIL CAYUSE" continued overleaf.]

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at the child, and the shadow of a smile crossed his features.

When spring came, and Silent River returned from the far-off hunting-grounds, he saw that there was nought but evil left in Khil Cayuse, and fearing lest the evil should spread throughout the tribe, he drove the old Chief forth from the teepees to dwell alone in the forest.

Thus for Khil Cayuse the way was made easy had he chosen to take it. When an Indian grows old, and is no longer able to travel with his tribe, he makes his way to some lonely place and there buries his face in his hands. Soon the grey ghosts of death gather in a silent circle around him; he hears the patter of moving paws, and feels a cold muzzle thrust against his face.

Thus had the fathers of Khil Cayuse died, and thus also would Khil Cayuse have died had there not been a mission for him to fulfil.

Leaving behind him the teepees the Indian made his way slowly and painfully to the trading post, and secreted himself in the underbush near. Soon he saw McGuire leave the house, and make his way into the forest by the old trail towards the teepees. Silently Khil Cayuse followed, and presently he reached a place where the trail ceased abruptly at the brink of a narrow canyon, across which a single tamarac had fallen.

Khil Cayuse smiled grimly when he saw on the bark of the tree the marks of the trader's moccasins. He crossed to the other side as McGuire had crossed, and lying at the edge of the canyon he hacked a deep groove in the underside of the tamarac. Then he hid himself near to await the return of the trader.

Darkness found him still waiting, for McGuire had returned home by a different route. Days slipped by, but still the Indian waited. The pangs of hunger took possession of him, for he had no food. Had he possessed a rifle the way would have been easy, but he had left the teepees unarmed. One morning he heard the sound of voices coming along the trail towards him from the trading post, and he crouched lower in his hiding.

It was seldom McGuire walked alone when the journey was such that he could take Bertha with him. The child's influence went far with the Indians, though doubtless it was her fair hair and gaily coloured clothing that appealed to them. That morning the two set out together by the old trail through the forest for the camp by the lake margin.

When they reached the canyon, McGuire seated the child upon the fallen tree, and, urging her to move with caution, stood waiting by till she should have crossed safely. But scarcely was she midway when a sound in the bush opposite reached the man's ears. He saw a ragged, disreputable figure rise from the bush and stagger into the trail, muttering hoarsely and pointing towards the child.

At a glance, McGuire recognised the wasted features of the old Chief, and drawing the revolver from his belt he ordered the man to stand. But as though he did not hear, the Indian staggered on—on towards the child, his great eyes fixed upon her.

Once, twice, McGuire fired. He heard the bullets ricochet away through the timber, but the Indian took no heed. Next moment he had thrown himself prostrate at the brink of the canyon, his thin arms stretching downwards, his knotted fingers clasped beneath the trunk of the tamarac.

It was then McGuire realised the dreadful truth. He heard a low crackling sound, and the tree began to sag downwards under the weight upon it. The child, seated midway, realised the danger also, and with a cry of horror, clung panic-stricken to the branches.

The face of Khil Cayuse was hidden in the grass, but his bony arms, thin as the arms of a child, were stretched downwards, his great hands clasped beneath the tree. A fit of coughing overcame him as the strain congested his lungs, and again the trader heard the slow crackling of the tamarac.

Frenziedly, McGuire called to the child, and slowly, fearfully, she made her way back to him. She clutched his outstretched hands, and with a prayer of thankfulness the trader drew her into safety.

"It is well, Khil Cayuse, my friend," he cried. "The child is safe."

"But Khil Cayuse lay very still, his face hidden. His two hands were still clasped beneath the tamarac, but as the trader watched, the tree slipped between them, and with a rending of branches, dropped downwards into the canyon.

Still Khil Cayuse lay as if he slept, and about his neck a string of plain blue beads sparkled in the sunlight.

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MR. EDITOR —HIS PAGE.

Be grateful to the Editor,
Who gathers up and flings
Within your door a goodly store
Of stories, verse, and things;

Reflect upon your evil case
If he should be no more,
And, with a smile upon your face,
Salute the Editor!

CONCERNING THE £260 STORY COMPETITION.

WHEN I suggested the other month that we should have finished judging the competition stories by the end of April, I spoke in haste. We shall be lucky to have achieved the task by the end of May. Consequently, owing to the exigencies of the printing industry, the result cannot appear in the ROYAL before the August number, published on July 22nd, and so you must be patient until then.

Of course the unhappy rejected are receiving, have received, and will continue to receive, their stories back as we go along. And it availeth nothing for the more militant among the as yet undealt with to write and call us frauds, swindlers, extortioners, malefactors, and runagates. We are doing the job as quickly as is consistent with careful reading and considered judgment.

PLANS FOR THE FUTURE.

I should like to interest you a little in what will appear in the ROYAL during this year if you will listen politely for a moment. We have a new series starting in July, in which the interest centres round a beautiful and accomplished maiden who is involved in many and extraordinary adventures. Beyond telling you that her name is Hilda I will say no more for the present, except that as we haven't had a series for some time in which the chief character is a girl, I hope you will like the change.

One of Mr. E. A. Morphy's Indian frontier stories appears next month, illustrated as usual by Mr. H. W. Koekkoek, with whose fine drawings you are already familiar. Stories by Dorothea Conyers, Max Rittenberg, T. C. Bridges, Winifred Carter, Agnes Herbert, and Henry Macdonald will also appear shortly.

But what causes me to shed at least one grey hair a day is the absence of letters from you either praising or condemning ROYAL stories.

IN THE UNITED STATES the readers of magazines practically edit the fiction. Pages of their letters are published every month. "'Red Blood,' by Wilbur Jones, is the goods all right all right," declares one, judging favourably. "Nix on 'Red Blood,'" exclaims another, wishing to savage the story. "Wilbur Jones is a mutt. Cut out the high-brow stunts, Mr. Editor, and give us stories that are real all-wool, dyed-in-the-yarn. Jones has lost you ten fans in our burg." Which means that the circulation fell ten copies in the writer's city because of Mr. Jones.

Now, this kind of thing helps the editor. Also, it helps authors to see what kind of story is popular, that they may write it. And there is also this to be said:

You pay, in the long run, both editors and authors. If you don't get what you want, and don't ask for it, you are merely spending money for nothing.

Here is a sporting offer: I will send the first fifty readers who write me a letter either of praise or blame within a fortnight of publishing day—April 22nd—a gift of a solid silver pencil-case, free, gratis, and for nothing. There!

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